BRAHMS

COLLES

VELUT ARBOR ÆVO

Presented to the

LIBRARY *of the*

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

from

the Library of

DR. ARTHUR PLETTNER
AND
ISA MCILWRAITH PLETTNER

From Grady, '62

Arthur Pettus

THE MUSIC OF THE MASTERS

EDITED BY WAKELING DRY

THE MUSIC OF THE MASTERS

BRAHMS

BY H. C. COLLES

NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S
UNION SQUARE
MCMVIII

Printed by
BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO.
Edinburgh

LIBRARY
JUN 26 1992
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	Chronological Table of the Life of Johannes Brahms	vii
	Bibliography	ix
I.	Sonatas	1
II.	Pianoforte Music	19
III.	Chamber Music	30
IV.	The Orchestra	52
V.	The Concertos	87
VI.	Songs for One or Two Voices	105
VII.	Smaller Choral Works and Four-Part Songs	124
VIII.	Larger Choral Works with Orchestra	139
IX.	The Position of Brahms	158
	Complete List of Works by Johannes Brahms	163

The thanks of the Author are due to Messrs. Alfred Lengnick & Co. (the English agents of Messrs. N. Simrock), who have with unfailing courtesy placed copies of their publications of Brahms's works at his disposal and rendered him very material assistance; also to Messrs. Augener and Co. for the loan of several works published in Edition Peters.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE LIFE OF JOHANNES BRAHMS

1833. Born at Hamburg on May 7th of humble parents.

1845 (*circa*). Became a pupil of Edward Marxsen, and studied the piano while still at school.

1848. Gave his first concert.

1853. First concert tour, with Reményi, Hungarian violinist. First meeting with Joachim at Hanover, introduced by the latter to Schumann. Publication by Schumann of *Neue Bahnen*, an article which proclaimed Brahms as the prophet of modern music.

1859. Played the pianoforte concerto in D minor, Op. 15, at the Gewandhaus, Leipzig, and provoked an outburst of unfavourable criticism. Conducted ladies' choir at Hamburg.

1862. Visited Vienna.

1863. Appointed conductor to the Singacademie, Vienna, and settled there.

1865. Death of Brahms's mother. First part of "German Requiem" composed.

1867. Its performance at Vienna.

1868. Concert tour with Stockhausen. First performance of the Requiem, complete but for the sixth movement, in Bremen Cathedral on Good Friday.

1869–72. Appearance of Choral Works, including "Triumphlied."

1872. Brahms conducted concerts of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna.

1876. First Symphony performed at Carlsruhe.

1878. Hamburg Philharmonic Jubilee Festival and first performance of the Violin Concerto, with Joachim as soloist. Publication of Second Symphony.

1881. Presented with degree D.Ph. at Breslau. Visited Meiningen. Second Piano Concerto produced at Stuttgart.

1884. Publication of Third Symphony.

1885. The Fourth Symphony produced at Meiningen.

1889. Presented with honorary citizenship of Hamburg.

1890. Visited Italy for the last time.

1895. Attended the Meiningen Festival, where the Pianoforte Concerto in B flat, "Triumphlied," Fourth Symphony, and Clarinet Sonatas were played.

1896. Death of Madame Schumann, Brahms's constant friend. At her funeral he caught a chill which induced his last illness.

1897. Died, April 3rd.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BRAHMS literature is still incomplete; few works of importance have appeared, though his compositions have been discussed in numerous essays and pamphlets. The following list does not do more than mention the larger works, and includes some of the smaller for the use of the general reader.

Deiters, H. "Johannes Brahms," a biographical sketch, translated with additions by Rosa Newmarch, edited with a preface by J. A. Fuller Maitland. (Fisher Unwin, 1888.)

Interesting, but owing to the date of publication necessarily incomplete.

Dietrich, A. "Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms." (Leipzig, Wigand, 1898. Translated by Hecht, London, 1899.)

Erb, J. L. "Brahms"—Master Musicians. (J. M. Dent & Co., 1905.)

Sketch and summary of life and work.

Hadow, W. H. "Studies in Modern Music," second series. (Seeley & Co., London, 1895.)

"Brahms and the Classical Tradition." (*Contemporary Review*, 1897.)

Illuminating critical essays on the position of Brahms in modern music.

Henschel, G. "Personal Recollections of Johannes Brahms." Pamphlet read before the Royal Institution, June 1905. A diary kept while travelling with Brahms.

Imbert, H. "Johannes Brahms, sa vie et son œuvre," (Paris, 1906, Librarie Fischbacker).

This, with other shorter writings by the same author, is an interesting contribution to the study of Brahms.

Kalbeck, M. "Johannes Brahms," vol. i., 1833–1862. (Vienna and Leipzig, 1904.)

The most authoritative life and critical study.

May, F. "Life of Johannes Brahms," two vols. (Edward Arnold, London, 1905.)

The largest English work yet published.

Mason. "From Grieg to Brahms." (New York, 1902.)

A series of essays, including one on Brahms.

Riemann. "Berühmter Musiker—Johannes Brahms." (Berlin, 1899.)

Simrock. "Johannes Brahms, Thematisches Verzeichniss." (Simrock, Berlin, 1904.)

Invaluable to students as a book of reference.

Vogel, B. "Johannes Brahms, sein Lebengang, etc." (Leipzig, Max Huse, 1888.)

Short descriptive pamphlet of the works and artistic position.

Articles are to be found in the dictionaries of *Baker*, *Grove*, *Riemann*, and others.

In the new edition of *Grove* (Macmillan, 1904) there is an important article by the Editor.

BRAHMS

THE
MUSIC OF THE MASTERS

CHAPTER I

SONATAS

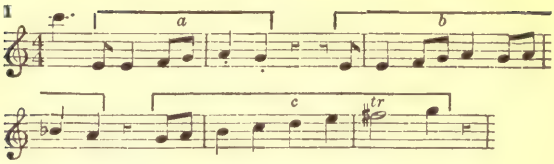
FEW among the great masters of the art of music have had the ground prepared for their feet to tread on as had Johannes Brahms. This is not to say that his work was easily wrought out. Far from it; the tranquil exterior of his life hid artistic struggles which can be traced in the fervent utterance of his noblest works. But as we look from him to Beethoven, struggling to realise the utmost possibilities of symphonic form, or even to Wagner, groping his way from the ineptitudes of contemporary opera towards an ideal music-drama, we must needs allow that Brahms had no such problem as these to solve, that he had not at once to create his art and fashion a vessel

to contain it; he had inherited that vessel from the masters of the past in the Sonata, a form of art perfected, pliable, exactly suited to his needs. Practically the whole of Brahms's instrumental work, with the exception of his later piano music, is contained within the wide limits of sonata form; it was to him what the fugue was to Bach, the form in which he could attain to that perfect symmetry of expression, which could make his music a symbol of the infinite. If anything is to be gained from a brief survey of the works of Brahms, from the youthful piano sonatas to the resplendent fourth symphony and the double concerto, the fact that all are conditioned by the principles of this one form must be borne carefully in mind.

In this chapter we are to consider those works which bear the title of Sonata. Of these, three are for piano alone, three for violin and piano, two for violoncello and piano, and two for clarinet and piano.

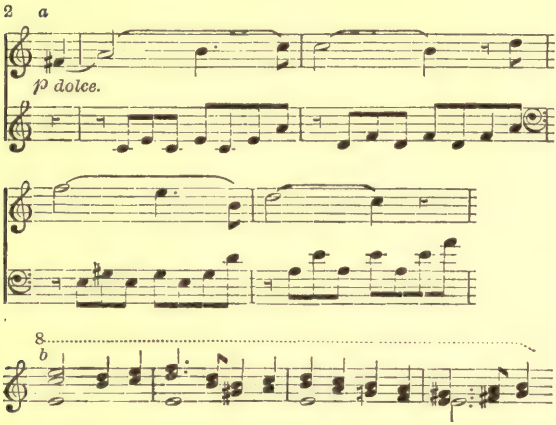
About the elements of sonata form it is impossible to speak here. It must be assumed that the reader has studied them in some text-book on form, or, what is much more important, knows them exemplified in at least the early sonatas of Beethoven.

Brahms found the sonata completed: Haydn and Mozart had developed its structure; Beethoven had breathed life into every part of it. He had shown that it was no longer necessary to restrict the musical ideas to first and second subjects, but that even the codettas and cadences, originally introduced merely for formal reasons, might be made a part of the individual expression of the work, and above all that the sonata was a worthy medium for the utterance of the noblest ideas of which music is capable. But his immediate successors had used the form with difficulty, had shaped their ideas to it rather than found it the natural shape of those ideas; and the most advanced composers, of whom Liszt was the apostle, had, by the time that Brahms arrived at years of discretion, proclaimed it to have been exhausted by Beethoven, and had assumed that henceforth new music could be only fettered and cramped by the limits of its outline. The opinion was freely spoken and put into practice in compositions which sought either to find new forms or to dispense with form of all but the very loosest kind. In face of such a point of view we turn to Brahms's Opus 1. It is a sonata for piano alone in C major.



This is the text; it is an inspiring one and stated in a simple and bold fashion which makes it unforgettable. At once we see an attitude very different from that of the dreaming romanticist. Here is no vague impression of nobility, half real, half imagined. The phrase (*a*), a rise of a fourth sinking again one degree, is one of the simple facts of music, and we see it extended a degree further in (*b*), and marching triumphantly on to a cadence on the dominant in (*c*). Nor does its progress stop here. With a rush Brahms breaks through to the key of B♭ and, restating his subject therein, ascends still further, till, by a magical transition, he arrives again at the keynote of C, and has achieved in doing so a magnificent tonal climax. Perhaps his devotion to form is a little too obvious in the next treatment of his theme, in which he builds up imitations of phrase (*a*) in a manner which seems slightly pedantic; but if so, it is one of the few marks of student-

ship which this or any of Brahms's early works possess. The episode is terse and emphatic, however, and the second subject follows immediately.

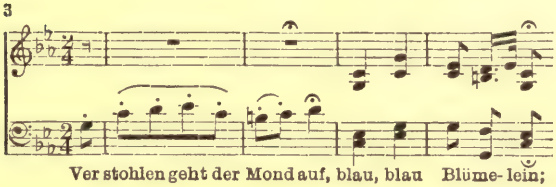


It shows a different side of Brahms; his intense love of simple melody, such as belongs to the German *Volkslied*. Through this and his love for the more energetic rhythms of Hungarian music he has won his first entrance into popular favour. Every one knows a few of his Hungarian dances, and every one loves the "Sandmännchen" and one or two examples of his arrangements of German *Volkslieder*. Here though the themes are not traceable to any

particular source, they are clearly the outcome of his national songs, especially the one marked (*b*). For this he seems to have a special affection, for after a short episode he returns to it, and reiterates it before passing on to the development section of the sonata. Here the three themes—that is, subject 1 and subject 2, *a* and *b*—are interwoven in the most complex way. Careful analysis shows that scarcely any other material is used, yet they appear in such new lights that they may well be mistaken for new matter. They in fact become new, ennobled and enriched by a wonderful process. At last a recapitulation of themes comes, in which Brahms adopts a very free course. The themes indeed appear in proper order, but all the elaborate treatment of the first is done away, and instead, he allows himself to plunge into remote keys, always coming back at the moment where otherwise the tonality might become confused. A coda follows, in which ten fingers are hardly sufficient to express all the phases in which the themes must appear before the composer can leave them. He longed to use all the piano at once, and so used both ends of it, working in a middle part by means of an agile left hand, thus trying to represent the

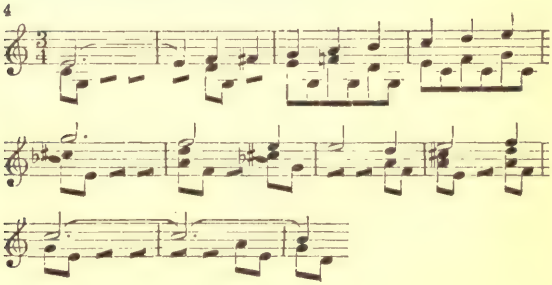
busy movement which his mind conceived. Throughout the three piano sonatas this effort to say more than the fingers can play is constantly apparent, especially in the slow movement of the second, where, in places, three closely covered staves give the appearance of a compressed orchestral score. Schumann's remark that Brahms turned the piano into a full orchestra comes to mind in this connection; though we may see in it the extraordinary fertility of Brahms's mind, this striving for more than the means allow spoilt the perfect repose of some of his early work and especially of the piano sonatas.

It is only possible to mention a few of the salient features of the other movements of Op. 1 and Opp. 2 and 5. In the *andante* of Op. 1 he takes a real folk-song for his theme, and even prints the words with it.



In a later chapter it will be necessary to speak of Brahms's skill in variations. Here

he only uses them to embroider the beautiful old tune and emphasise its serene calm. He comes very near to telling us what passed in his mind as he wrote, but neither here nor elsewhere did he ever pass the border of programme music. A rollicking *scherzo* sweeps away this mysterious atmosphere of moonlight and flowers, and in its trio one theme must be quoted as an example of the soaring melody in which Brahms took delight.



Over and over again instances of it appear, showing how spontaneous and buoyant was the melodic gift through which the strong ardour of Brahms's youthful nature expressed itself. The last movement is an example of his use of rondo form, in which he was always free in the order of his sub-

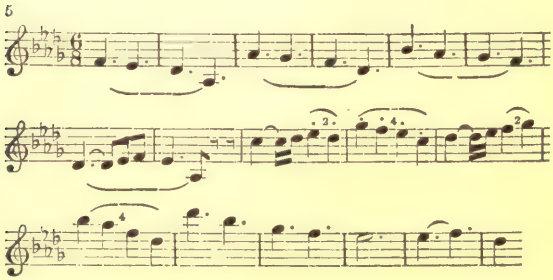
jects; here a second subject puts in a single appearance only, and its importance is taken from it by the arrival of the third theme, again of the folk-song type, which seems to engage the composer's special affection, for he uses it to the end of the work with the first theme to the exclusion of the second subject.

Op. 2 in F♯ minor shares with Op. 1 the unswerving devotion to symmetry of structure, the complicated technique imposed by musical needs, and it has about it yet more of the young giant rejoicing in his strength. The *finale* is perhaps the most remarkable movement, and there is in its subject something curiously Beethoven-like, though it would be difficult to say exactly where the likeness comes in.

Op. 5 in F minor is the sonata most often played by pianists. In it Brahms shows a greater command over himself; he seems to realise that a part of art lies in leaving something unsaid and so stimulating the hearer to create for himself the imagined part. In the slow movement he gives again a little clue to his thought, not this time by using a folk-song, but by three lines of verse from Sternau printed at the beginning—

"Der Abend dämmert, das Mondlicht scheint,
Da sind zwei Herzen in Liebe vereint,
Und halten sich selig umfangen."

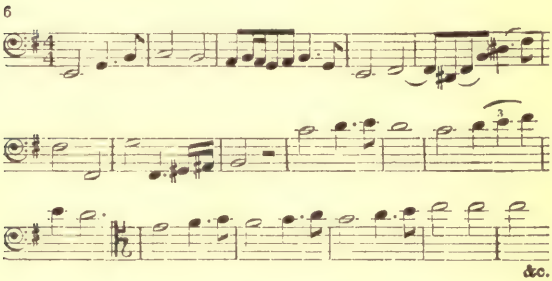
After the *scherzo*, again of the exuberant youthful type, an Intermezzo, called "Rückblick," looks back lovingly to the beautiful theme of the *andante*. However, no external idea adds anything to this music; the long, sweeping melody of the principal theme, the tentative suggestions of the contrasting episode and the overwhelming *crescendo* of the coda speak their own message. Once more in the last movement the third theme assumes an important place and ousts the original second subject from its position. It is a noble tune, and reminds one of the *finale* to Beethoven's Choral Symphony and of Brahms's own First Symphony (see Chap. iv.). It is quoted here without accompaniment.



Brahms gave up writing sonatas for the piano. Perhaps he found, and these examples suggest it, that his thoughts in this form could not find complete expression in the piano alone, or perhaps, as opportunities for performance on a larger scale came more readily, it was not worth while to confine himself to the single instrument. He went on writing works in sonata form for combinations of instruments, for instance Op. 8, a trio in B; Op. 18, sestet for strings in B♭; and Opp. 25 and 26, quartets for piano and strings. But the next work to which the name sonata is given is that in E minor for violoncello and piano, Op. 38. The sonatas for a single instrument with the piano are in no sense compressed symphonies. They deal with simple outlines of sustained melody exactly suiting the genius of the instrument used. The rich tone of the violoncello, the human cry of the violin, and, when in his later years he had heard Herr Mühlfeld play, the pure, impassive beauty of the clarinet, appealed to his love of a beautiful sound, often spoken of as a sense of musical colour. Brahms cared comparatively little for the rapid passing from colour to colour which contributes so much to the charm of modern music, but he

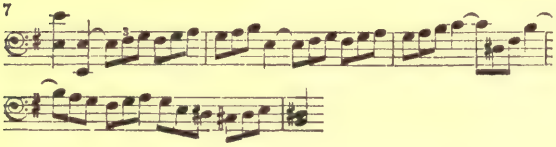
loved to dwell upon the possibilities of each instrument, and a sonata, far from being too long a form for the purpose, became the only adequate one.

The E minor sonata for violoncello and piano shows on its very first page Brahms's appreciation of the instrument with which he was dealing.



This theme covers all the best range of the instrument from its mysterious low notes to its poignantly expressive tenor register, and its character dominates the whole movement. A delightfully spontaneous *allegretto quasi menuetto* and a bustling *finale* complete the sonata. Of the last it must be said that it approaches fugue form as nearly as a sonata movement can. It certainly has a second subject, but this theme, given out by the pianist's left hand,

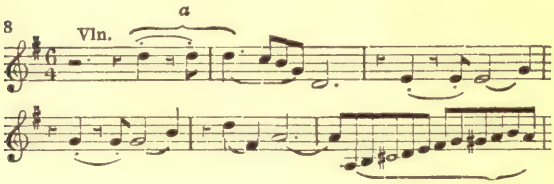
receives a regular exposition and is used with great ingenuity of imitation.



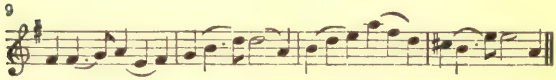
It was many years before the second violoncello sonata appeared. While the first with the great piano quintet, Op. 34, marks the climax of Brahms's young work, the second, Op. 99, comes in order next to the fourth symphony, Op. 98. It is one of the works which he completed on his holiday at Thun in 1886. It stands therefore among the violin sonatas, and has a last movement which for pure beauty of melody can rank with any of them, while its first movement, starting with a bold subject declaimed by the violoncello, has something of that rugged plain-speaking which in art as in individuals is so often misunderstood. This habit of expressing exactly what he means to convey without much thought for his audience has certainly done something to hinder the popularity of Brahms.

In the violin sonatas, however, tenderness

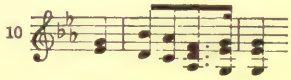
and beauty fill his thoughts, and the result in the first is a theme of infinite possibilities for development.



The repeated note (marked *a*) and the falling *arpeggio* from it, constantly occurring in different relationships, has a pleading, questioning tone, which finds satisfaction in the stalwart melody to which it gives place.



This sonata has an *adagio* in E♭ of gracious beauty inspired by the simple outline of the phrase—



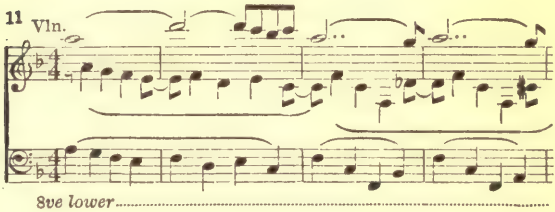
The rise of the third and the fall from it appear constantly throughout the movement, and this feature is lovingly worked

into the central section of the *finale*. The principal theme of the latter movement is identical with that of two songs in Op. 59, where the accompaniment, which appears here as the piano part, suggests the pattering of rain (see Chap. vi.), but the theme is closely related to Example 8, since it has in common with it the reiterated note *a*.

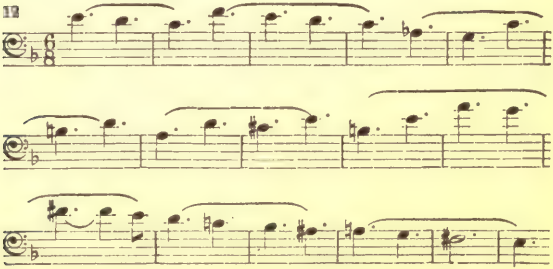
This sonata is perhaps the most beautiful because the most human of the three. The first movement of the sonata in A major, Op. 100, is one of the most easily intelligible of all Brahms's sonata movements, and it has the advantage of being comparatively easy to play. In the first and last movements, *allegro amabile* and *allegretto grazioso* respectively, the themes follow one another with a placid appropriateness which leaves the impression of a peculiarly gracious outline of melody. The second movement is an example of a favourite device of Brahms, that of alternating *vivace* with *andante* and so combining slow movement with *scherzo;* but as music its interest is comparatively slight.

The first movement of the sonata in D minor is touched with melancholy. The violin melody is made eloquent by the interval of the rising fourth; while the

piano syncopations are a type of accompaniment which Brahms often used, and from which, if carefully played, a peculiar and expressive resonance can be gained (compare Songs, Op. 94, Nos. 3 and 4).

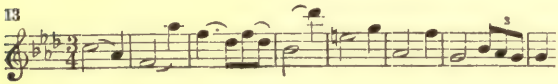


A short slow movement of dignified melody in the comforting major key follows, and is succeeded by a restless and agitated *scherzo* (F♯ minor). The last movement has for second subject a tune which may be compared with that quoted as No. 6. It appears first in C major as given here—

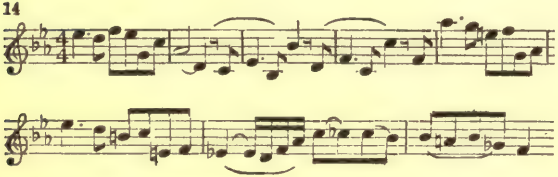


Very near the end of his life Brahms visited Meiningen, and between the years 1891 and 1893 spent a good deal of time there. Two other sonatas, Op. 120, were partly the result of these visits, for they were written for the clarinet with piano, and were inspired by the playing of Herr Mühlfeld, the principal clarinettist of the orchestra. In them Brahms's understanding of the instrument is remarkable. He writes for it clear and tranquil melodies like the following, the first subjects of each sonata (F minor and E♭),

13



14



or delicate figures of *arpeggio* accompaniment and ornament which can be breathed with perfect expression. There is no violence, nothing which could make even a less perfect player than he for whom they

were written force the tone and cause this delicately-voiced instrument to descend, as it so easily can, from the sublime to the ridiculous. Near the end of the last movement of the second sonata occurs a passage which has been pointed out as perhaps the only appearance of Wagner's influence upon Brahms. Its chromatic rise and fall and increasing excitement certainly suggests an emotion without restraint which was usually foreign to his nature and to his art, and whether or not it be really Wagnerian, it may be quoted as a type of expression not only unlike Brahms but at variance with the particular feeling of the clarinet sonatas.

CHAPTER II

PIANOFORTE MUSIC

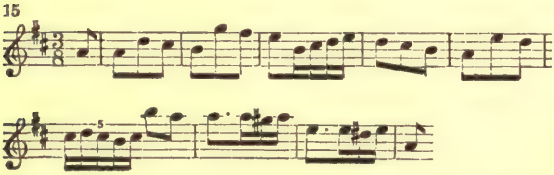
AFTER his youthful outbursts in sonata form, Brahms began to take the piano seriously. His music in the sonatas had been serious enough—as serious and as enthusiastic as only young art can be—but, as we have seen, in applying it to the instrument the accidents of fingers and keyboard scarcely had been considered. He deliberately set himself to settle these questions by exhausting technical possibilities; for the purpose at once of studying the technique of the piano and of composition, no form is so useful as that of variations on a given theme. By means of it a composer discovers how a theme may be ornamented and expanded without losing its identity, and what kinds of ornamentation are suitable to the instrument used, without being hampered by considerations of balance and design upon a large scale such as meet him in sonata form. In each

variation he begins a new process, a new type of development, which need not become an integral part of an extended scheme. Variations are justified musically as are a number of illustrations of the same subject; they have continuity of subject, but each presents a different aspect of it. With amateurs they are rarely very popular, but to musicians they are attractive, since they offer unlimited opportunities for unfolding and expanding the hidden possibilities of a beautiful theme. The variations in the slow movement of Beethoven's trio, Op. 70, in B♭, or those in his last piano sonata are the best possible examples of how the beauty of a theme may be emphasised. With some of Brahms's variations for the piano, however, it is rather the individuality of each one, and the immense technical resource which they supplied to him, which is of importance. As regards the theme itself he was not always particular; sometimes it was original, sometimes taken from another source. Thus we have :—

Op. 9. Variations on a theme by Robert Schumann.
Op. 21. 1. Variations on an original theme.
Op. 21. 2. Variations on an Hungarian theme.
Op. 23. Variations on a theme by Robert Schumann for four hands.

Op. 24. Variations and fugue on a theme by Handel.
Op. 35. Variations on a theme by Paganini.

Into the details of these sets it is of course impossible to enter. Op. 9 is comparatively simple, with some traces of conventional usage in the planning of the variations. They are sixteen in number; the reverent and loving treatment of the theme is a fitting offering to the friend to whom Brahms owed much. Op. 21, No. 1, has a beautiful tune written by Brahms especially for these variations.



The fragment quoted is characteristic of his manner of building a theme so as to reach a higher point with each phrase (compare bars 1 and 5, 2 and 6). In each variation he takes a new rhythmic figure, applying it to the whole outline of the theme, and in so doing evolves some passages which are extremely difficult to play, but

which are quite within the bounds of piano technique.

The Hungarian theme of the second set belonging to Op. 21 is of peculiar rhythm. Nowadays it would be written probably in 7–4 time. Brahms wrote it in a bar of 3–4 followed by one of 4–4, in order to make its accentuation clear. The earlier variations preserve this rhythm, and are an example of Brahms's interest in ventures of the kind. A love of rhythmic experiment of every kind is a strong feature of his art, and it was largely his power of combining all kinds of rhythms which made him so great a writer of variations.

The sets on themes by Handel and Paganini are among the most difficult pieces of pianoforte music, but their difficulties are of a kind which belong to the piano and do not spring from a disregard for it. In them the variations are more closely connected one with another than in the earlier sets, and in some cases they have the additional interest that, besides their common relationship to the theme, the later are evolved from the earlier numbers in the same set. Perhaps they are hardly practical music, though a great pianist can work wonders with them. Brahms, like Bach, could forget

the weakness of a human audience; and in writing twenty-five variations all in the key of B♭, with an elaborate fugue in addition, as he did to the Handel theme, he thought more of working out the abstract possibilities of his subject than of addressing listeners. That he regarded these things primarily as his private study is suggested by the fact that after Op. 35 he abandoned variations for the piano, except in the case of those on a theme by Haydn, Op. 56, which appeared as a piano duet as well as an orchestral piece.

In 1866, the year of the Paganini variations, were published the sixteen waltzes for piano duet, Op. 39. These charming little pieces are the first instance of Brahms's treatment of simple dance forms; each one is distinctive in melody, and the whole show how great a variety of rhythm can be used within the rigid limits of 3–4 time (Compare Liebeslieder Waltzes, Opp. 52 and 65). Two years later were published the first two books of Hungarian Dances, also as piano duets. Most of these have become popular in the violin arrangements of Joachim and a few as orchestral pieces. Brahms probably wrote both these and the waltzes for piano duet more as a simple

and convenient method of expressing his ideas than because of any special affection for the means. He arranged some of his large chamber and orchestral works in the same way. The two last books of Hungarian dances did not appear until 1880, but may be included here. They are much less known than the earlier volumes, but deserve to be heard more often.

With these few exceptions, there is a cessation of piano music from Op. 35 to Op. 76, which appeared in 1879. This work marks a new departure. It consists of eight short pieces to which are given the titles of Capriccio or Intermezzo according to their character. They are all in perfectly simple forms, generally that known as "ternary," that is, one theme given out and developed leading to a second, with a return to the first and sometimes a short coda which weaves the two together. When they are lively or energetic the first name is given to them; when slow and thoughtful, the second. The adoption of these generic titles illustrates Brahms's refusal to commit himself to any limited meaning such as most modern composers love to claim for their music. Each one of these pieces has a character of its own so strong as to be

unmistakable; a more definite title could have added nothing to their meaning. This was not Brahms's first attempt to find some more concentrated form than the sonata in which to write for the piano. As early as Op. 10 he had published Four Ballades which were unconventional in structure and full of beautiful melodies. But from this time onward he never, with the exception of the Two Rhapsodies of Op. 79, sought any larger shape for his thoughts expressed through the piano alone. These, with Opp. 116 to 119, published in 1892–93, form the final and by far the most attractive period of his compositions for piano. Some of them, especially the three Intermezzi of Op. 117 and the Rhapsodie which ends Op. 119, are very popular and frequently played, but most of them are not known and loved by amateurs as they should be. Some are difficult to play, but none have the extreme difficulty of his earlier work. In some the melody has to be sought for; it lies in an inner part, or is at first sight involved amidst conflicting rhythms, but its beauty is always worth the effort of discovery. It is impossible to do more than mention a few which are likely to be appreciated by those who have not gone very deep in

their study of Brahms. Op. 116, No. 1, Capriccio, and No. 2, Intermezzo, have straightforward qualities which are soon appreciated, and the simplicity of No. 6, Intermezzo, must make its appeal at once. Op. 117, No. 1, is so popular that it scarcely need be named, but its companions are equally lovely.

The lyrical character of Op. 118, No. 2, makes it easily intelligible. This opus includes a Ballade, No. 3, and a beautiful Romanze, No. 5. Why Brahms here left his favourite titles is not very clear, for though the latter is romantic in character the same might be said of any of the Intermezzi, and the Ballade may be classed with the Capriccii.

Op. 119 consists of three Intermezzi and the well-known Rhapsodie in E♭. The first is most simple and easily comprehended; but a pianist who has experimented with even a few of those already mentioned will have little difficulty in entering into the meaning of this, Brahms's last opus for the piano.

In tracing the development of Brahms's attitude towards piano music from the time when youthful enthusiasm led him to try to express all things in the sonatas for piano

solo, through the time of study resulting chiefly in the sets of variations, to his ultimate style of clear expression in the lyrical pieces, Opp. 116–119, we have necessarily left unnamed a few works which have distinctive characteristics of their own, as well as some arrangements of works by other composers which should be mentioned for the sake of completeness.

The *scherzo* in E♭ minor, Op. 4, is contemporary with the piano sonatas. In form it is exactly that of a movement from a sonata, save that it has two trios. It is more dainty and lightsome than any of the *scherzos* in the three sonatas, however, and has a fantastic grace which appears again in the third of the Four Ballades, Op. 10.

The two Rhapsodies, Op. 79, stand apart, both from the early period of sonatas and the later one of short pieces. That in G minor is the most popular. It is direct, forcible, and written in the form of the first movement of a sonata. The first, in B minor, is almost unique in Brahms's music. It evolves a new form from the combination of certain characteristics of the sonata and the minuet and trio. To analyse it here is unnecessary, but it must be noted as a powerful example of Brahms's ability to

express himself with unflinching boldness and freedom, while, to whatever degree the actual structure might be modified by the needs of his musical ideas, it was impossible for him to lose touch with fundamental principles of balance.

An interesting sidelight upon Brahms's development as a composer for the piano is shed by the Fifty-one Studies, collected and published in 1893. In these he developed his technique both as composer and player; they include every kind of difficulty, from *arpeggio* passages which move over an enormous range to combined rhythms, such as groups of five notes in the right hand against groups of four in the left, seven against six and against eight. They have not in themselves any musical value, but are merely short examples of the types of passages used in his variations and in the concertos. A few arrangements have importance in this connection, that of an Étude by Chopin, in which the right hand is set to play in double notes what Chopin deemed sufficiently difficult as a single melody. A Rondo after Weber, and two forms of a Presto from Bach, as well as the arrangement for left hand alone of the famous Bach Chaconne for Violin are studies

of the same kind. The arrangement for piano of a gavotte from Gluck's *Ephigenie* is a charming piece of work, though Brahms's contribution to it is perhaps not very considerable.

CHAPTER III

CHAMBER MUSIC

If the foregoing sketch of the sonatas of Brahms and his compositions for the piano alone has at all fulfilled its purpose, it will have shown that he was allied with all true musicians in seeking to make his art the expression of beautiful ideas, which had with him less definite relation to other, non-musical ones than is the case with many modern composers; because they were self-reliant they had to be built in a firmer structure to insure their permanency. Therefore in writing all his chamber-works in sonata form, he was not clinging tenaciously to a worn-out theory, but giving expression to thought which could have no other complete utterance. His mind was conservative, but independent, and in passing his works rapidly in review it will be necessary to point to illustrations of these qualities. It is perhaps rather surprising to

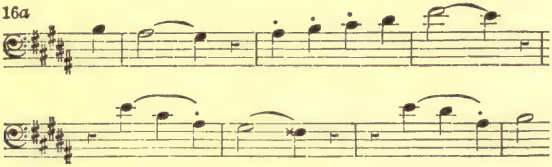
find that he did not turn more readily to the string quartet as a medium for his art, since in writing for it, as for no other combination of instruments, the composer treads upon air; he is hampered by few executive restraints, as in dealing with an instrument like the piano, while complexities of tone have not to be thought of, as with the orchestra. He has in the quartet a pure and ethereal tone capable of all expression, yet unified as no other set of instruments can be. It must always be remembered, however, that Brahms's instrumentation started from the piano and worked outwards to all other instruments. The piano was his first friend, and it was only when he had "turned it into a full orchestra" that he realised that it was not equal to all his demands upon it. His earlier compositions of the chamber-music kind, then, for the most part include the piano with the strings. We have first the trio in B major, Op. 8, followed by the two quartets for piano and strings, Opp. 25 and 26, and the quintet, Op. 34. To this early period, however, belong both the sestets for strings, that in B♭, Op. 18, and in G, Op. 36. The first of these was written in 1862, the year before the two piano quartets just men-

tioned, and the second in 1866, the year after the quintet.

It will be worth while to devote to the trio in B major a little more than the hasty glance which is all that we can hope to give to many of these works. From the fact that it is his first chamber work and that he re-wrote it in later years, its two editions make it the most powerful example of the development of Brahms's style which could be given. The theme of the first movement is one of those rich diatonic tunes which are among the composer's most loveable characteristics, and, save that in the later edition he took away some phrases for the violin in order to let it be heard in its simplicity, the first exposition of it remains unchanged. It would be misleading to say that all the alterations are in the direction of simplicity; a glance at the second subject section of this movement seems to contradict the idea. Nothing could be simpler to read and to play than the notes of the earlier edition, the theme given out by the piano unharmonised and subsequently treated with plain minim and crotchet accompaniments when it is repeated by the strings. In the later edition a much extended theme is substi-

tuted; it is of wider compass and is worked out with more elaborate technique. A phrase from each is illuminating.

16*a*



b

That marked (*a*) is the simpler, if "simple" and "easy" be taken as synonymous terms, but for strength of character it cannot be compared with (*b*), and Brahms had found by the time he made his revision that strong outline can be simple in spite of its greater difficulty. Much of the development of the new is dependent upon passages which this greater strength of treatment introduced into the first section, whereas the old is almost entirely concerned with the more or less conventional development of the first theme. It is noticeable that in the later edition the *reprise* is much compressed. This is very important; in his earlier work Brahms

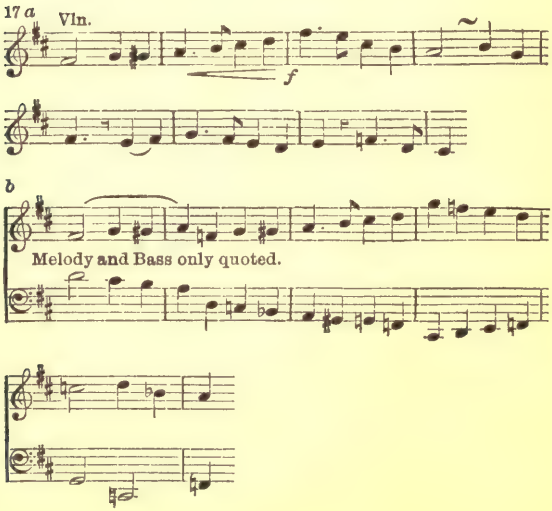
accepted the principle of much repetition almost as Mozart did, and far more implicitly than did Beethoven in his later works. It is characteristic of all these which have been named as belonging to the earlier group, but as he progressed he tended to shorten the repetition of the first subject and sometimes even to omit it, or reserve it for the coda—that is to say, to place the second subject before it.

To return to the trio in B major, the *scherzo*, its second movement, he retained almost intact; it is a delightful and dainty movement in B minor, not of the exuberant type which belongs to the piano sonata, Op. 5, but with a touch of mystery which has learnt much from Beethoven. It is worth noticing, though, that he re-wrote the ending, where originally he made the piano sustain long, impracticable chords *pp*. In the slow movement the changes are again striking. He cut it down to about two-thirds of its original length. The form of a tranquil first theme, succeeded by a more complex second one, with a return to the first and a coda, was evidently most satisfactory to Brahms. He used it in the piano quartet in C minor, the three string quartets, the horn trio, the clarinet trio,

and the clarinet quintet. In the first form of this trio he had attempted a more discursive scheme, including an *allegro* episode before the final coda, but this he changed to his favourite simple form. Mr. Fuller Maitland, in his edition of "Grove's Dictionary," points out that the second theme of the original is like Schubert's "Am Meer," and suggests that as the cause of its removal. It is a small instance of the strong influence which Schubert's work exerted upon Brahms in his younger years, and the music substituted for it is very characteristic of his later style, especially in its moving inner parts and subtle harmonies to a diatonic melody. The last movement was practically re-written, the most striking feature being the birth of a new and splendid second subject in D major, which comes instead of a less inspired one in F♯ major. This necessarily alters the whole course of the work and the transformation is wonderful. The ending, before protracted in the old-fashioned style, is now made terse and emphatic. This comparison of the young and the old Brahms shows that in the early works we have to take the presence of some conventions for granted, just as in older music, and to look beyond

them for the inspiration which is rarely if ever marred by them.

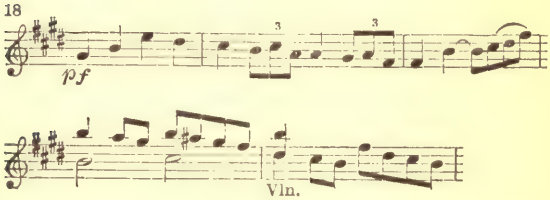
Leaving for the moment the first sestet, the two quartets for piano and strings come next. Op. 25 in G minor has a profound first movement in which the first subject is composed of two distinct ideas—one in G minor, the other in B♭ major—both of which are very fully developed. The second subject is a memorable tune which may be compared with that of the trio of the *scherzo* of Op. 1 (see Example 5).



Example 17 (*b*) shows a treatment very characteristic of Brahms's younger manner, a reckless way of bursting the bonds of the key for a wider sweep of melody. When this theme returns, (*a*) appears in the unusual key of E♭, giving him a chance to make a still wider detour at the passage corresponding to (*b*) which brings him into his key again. This is the most striking movement; there is no slow movement, but a charming Intermezzo, *allegro ma non troppo;* it is apt to sound long because of its consistent development and repetition after the trio, as well as from the continued prevalence of 9–8 rhythm. An *andante con moto,* in place of *scherzo* or minuet, follows with a delightful theme, which suggests Haydn, though its treatment is all Brahms. The *Rondo alla Zingarese* has the same rhythmic impulse which inspired the composer in the composition of the favourite Hungarian dances.

In the second quartet in A major we must pass over the beautiful first movement to call special attention to the slow movement. It represents Brahms's experiment before he found satisfaction in the simple form of slow movement mentioned in connection with the B major trio, but though he adopts

a modification of first movement form, there is no symptom of uncertainty in its treatment to mark it as an experiment. A first theme, in E major, needs only to be heard to be loved; the tune is played by the piano, but the string accompaniment in pairs of quavers is an essential part of the theme, for the rhythm persists through almost the whole movement.

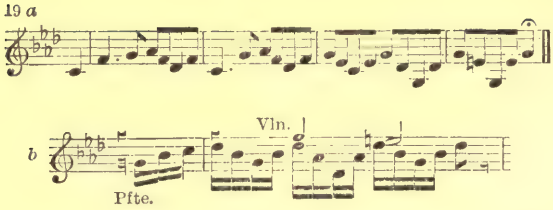


When the tune is completed the quavers are repeated *pp.* by the strings; they are the quiet heart-beat of the movement. This course, however, is disturbed by the entrance of rapid and harp-like *arpeggii* on the piano, on that emotional chord, the diminished seventh. This episode is of a kind quite unusual with Brahms. He rarely condescended to work so directly for a beautiful effect of tone as here, where these mystic piano passages alternate with the murmur of the slurred pairs of quavers on

the strings, while the tonality becomes vague and the listener must almost hold his breath in expectancy. From it the first theme again emerges, and sounds all the more radiant for the clouded effect of this wonderful episode. In the middle section which follows there is a large-minded blending of diverse elements. An impulsive descending theme, very characteristic of Brahms's youth, is first heard on the piano, and against it come the pairs of quavers again on the strings; this gives place to yet another strong contrast, a tranquil theme in B major, first played in delicious three-part counterpoint by the strings and afterwards embroidered and ornamented by the piano. Then comes a return, in which all the elements save this last one are blended, and to some extent developed, and the music dies away, the piano *arpeggii* and the pairs of quavers being last heard beneath sustained chords played by the strings. The movement is almost unique in Brahms's chamber works for the variety of its material and the mastery with which its different elements are knit together. It is followed by one of those cases where Brahms's love of symmetry led him to forget that audiences

are human. The *scherzo* and trio are each in complete first-movement form, the *scherzo* being repeated after the trio, and although both are handled with exquisite lightness of touch, the movement in which so much repetition takes place cannot fail to be too long. One feels quite sure that had Brahms revised this quartet in later years, as he did the first trio, he would have modified this and the last movement, which, although easy to follow, tends to become redundant as old-fashioned *rondo* form naturally must.

In the great quintet for piano and strings, Op. 34, which we have taken to mark the close of Brahms's young chamber music, we find him shaping his form to suit the matter in hand. The first movement is indeed perfectly regular, except that C♯ minor and F♯ minor are unconventional keys for the first and second appearance of the second subject when the key of the piece is F minor. Here it is the powerful use of the different elements in the themes which calls for notice. A comparison of it with the first movement of the G minor quartet would give some parallel, but here the connection between the parts of the first subject is closer.

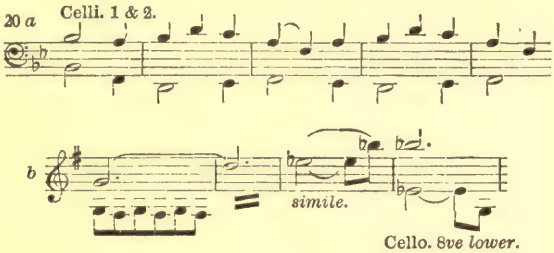


No. 19 shows that the two parts are different aspects of one musical idea, (*a*) thoughtful and introspective, (*b*) full of vigorous action. The development of such material gives Brahms the chance of evolving one of the most gigantic first movements which even he ever attained. Passing by the expressive and simple *andante*, we find in the *scherzo* a very free form. Three themes of strongly-contrasted character make up its subject matter; these follow one another in rapid succession and are developed in turn. The first, played by violin and viola in octaves, begins upon a syncopated *arpeggio* of A♭, then soars higher and higher in 6–8 rhythm, keeping the syncopation by tying the first beat and so evading an accent upon it. It is a melody of an elusive charm, dispelled by the second theme which is scarcely more than the vibration of a crisp rhythm, played very softly as though the instruments

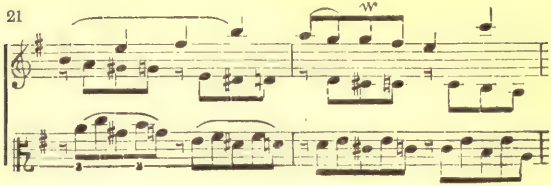
muttered to themselves. They suddenly break out into a swinging march tune (*ff.*), which is the third subject, and the many relations of these materials form a *scherzo* so exciting that one is glad to hear it played all through again after the trio. In the *finale,* instead of ending with conventional *reprise* and coda, a last-section *presto* is reached in which variations of both the original themes of the movement are used, and which combines in itself the functions of development and coda. It makes a far more interesting ending than the old rondo form could, since it throws the climax to the very end of the work.

We have lingered over a few representative movements of Brahms's early chamber work, and must pass by the two beautiful sestets for strings with but a few words. Perhaps the use of six instruments, like the wide-stretched chords in the piano sonatas, shows a certain reluctance to confine himself to the pale harmonic effects of pure chamber music. In both, however, his wealth of melody and free use of the strings show how congenial to his nature was this mode of expression. The first sestet, that in B♭, shows strongly the influence of Schubert, especially in the theme for varia-

tions of the slow movement, and in the gracious *rondo* which forms the finale. The second, in G, if not more beautiful, is more characteristic of its composer. To give one example only, a comparison of the first subjects of each, both in 3–4 time, shows the greater strength of the second.

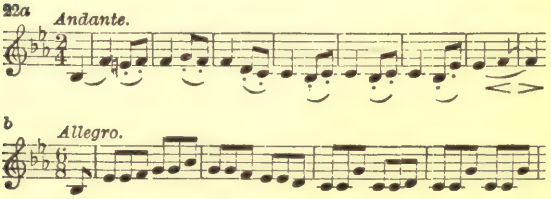


That bold outline necessitating a momentary digression from the key is quite Brahms's own, and one sees at once what possibilities such a feature gives him for development. Both have for slow movements a set of variations, the form in which, next to his favourite ternary one, he most often cast such movements. In the second sestet both theme and variations are particularly full of that poetical beauty which is sometimes lacking in works in this form.



No. 21 shows the first phrase of the theme, and its accompaniment illustrates Brahms's love of mixed rhythms.

Next in order after the second sestet comes the horn trio, Op. 40 (1868), followed by the first two string quartets, both Op. 51 and both composed in 1873. The horn trio is without a parallel in Brahms's music, so wonderfully is it conditioned by the special character of the horn. The quotation of the two principal themes from the first and last movements shows at once that they are horn themes,



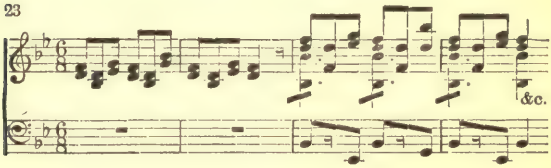
and throughout there is a simplicity which

suits well with the lovely tone and limited executive powers of that instrument. This is most noticeable in the first movement, where Brahms was wont to exert all his powers and to develop his themes with rigorous devotion to the needs of sonata form; here, however, he is content merely to contrast this haunting tune, Example 22 (*a*), with another more active one expressive of the character of the violin which takes the lead in it.

With the two quartets, Op. 51, we touch the other extreme of Brahms's character. From the simple, almost lyrical, style of the horn trio we are plunged with the first movement of the string quartet in C minor into the most intricate process of musical evolution, in which the composer seems to follow unswervingly his own train of thought irrespective of other minds. Even the distinction of first and second subject is difficult, so closely woven is the movement and so completely does each phrase seem to grow out of the last. There are passages in this quartet, however, which at once appeal through their beauty of sound apart from the masterly musicianship of the whole; such are the *romanze* and the trio of its third movement.

The second quartet in A minor is much more easily comprehended; the whole first movement is native to the pure tone of the four stringed instruments, and the third movement, in which a *quasi menuetto* theme alternates with an *allegretto vivace*, is very characteristic of Brahms's lighter vein. The third string quartet, Op. 67, is separated from the other two by the third piano quartet, but may well be mentioned with them. It opens with a theme, the light-heartedness of which reminds one of Schubert. The second violin and viola lead the way, the others echoing their phrases thus—

23



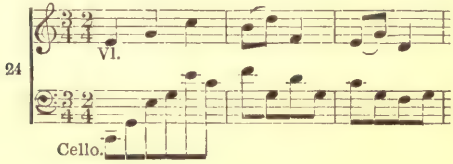
One peculiarity of form must here be mentioned. The last movement is a set of variations on a tune played first in the usual way, but as the variations advance Brahms introduces into them the theme of the first movement (Example 23), using it as a part of them. This is a more artistic

use of the old device, employed by Mendelssohn and others, of introducing the first movement theme as a coda to the whole work.

The third piano quartet in C minor, Op. 60, was composed in 1875. The mysterious beginning with its vague tonality, suddenly illumined by the downward scale of C minor upon the strings, the beauty of the second subject, and most of all the sublime theme of the slow movement, have made it one of the best loved of Brahms's works. One or two points of form should be noticed, as that the second subject section of the first movement is a little set of variations on the theme first played by the piano, which are still further added to in the *reprise ;* also that this is a case when the full re-statement of the first subject is reserved for the coda.

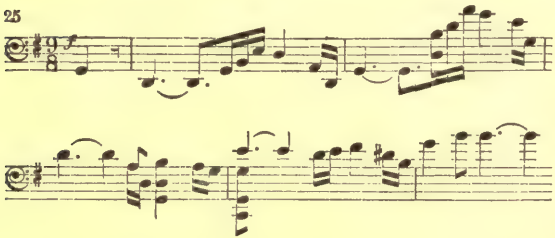
The only other works of Brahms for piano and strings are the two trios, that in C, Op. 87, and in C minor, Op. 101. The latter is more often played. Op. 87 needs to be frequently heard for its beauties to become apparent ; it has for slow movement a set of variations, and a *finale* built upon one of those broad melodies which Brahms delighted to write for strings.

Op. 101 in C minor, however, arrests attention at once by the gigantic outline of its melodic phrases and its bold rhythms; having gained the ear of his audience, Brahms never for one moment lets the interest flag or indulges his own thought at the expense of his hearers. The spacious theme of the second subject, the plaintive grace of the *Presto non assai* which takes the place of a *scherzo,* most of all the lovely *andante grazioso,* and lastly the vigorous and healthy *finale,* all speak straight to the hearers. The theme of the *andante* is a combination of triple and duple time with such perfect results that there is nothing experimental in sound. It was so written because that was the only way of writing it.



Of the two quintets for strings, Op. 88 in F, and Op. 111 in G, the first again is overshadowed somewhat by the second, though it is a beautiful work. It was

written in 1883, the same year as the trio in C major, next to which it is placed in order of opus numbers. Contrary to the composer's usual practice, Op. 88 is in three movements only, but the second combines in itself the elements of slow movement and *scherzo* by alternating sprightly little episodes with a most thoughtful and expressive theme, *grave ed appassionato.* The second string quintet is among the last of Brahms's compositions, being written in 1891, and, like the C minor trio, it seizes its audience with tenacious grip. Who could hear this theme given out by the violoncello beneath a *tremolo* of the upper strings, and not listen ?



The slow movement is full of pathos and, instead of containing a first theme, a contrast and a return, is rather a short fantasia upon a single subject. It is followed

by an *allegretto* of charming simplicity; a *finale* worthy to balance the opening movement for complexity of detail, though the outline of the form is quite clear, ends this great work.

It remains only to speak of the two works which closed this monumental contribution to chamber music, the clarinet trio, Op. 114, and the clarinet quintet, Op. 115. Like the two sonatas already mentioned, these were called forth by the playing of Herr Mühlfeld. The trio for clarinet, violoncello, and piano suggests its origin—that is, it sounds like the study of an instrument, in spite of many passages of wonderful beauty. In the first two movements we feel that Brahms is applying his methods to the clarinet, and it is not until the third movement that complete grace puts the crown upon his efforts. But the quintet rises above all considerations of instrumental technique. Had Brahms never heard the great clarinettist, that music must have been expressed somehow. It is the composer's last word in that part of music in which he did his greatest work, a work which no one has yet been found to carry on. The first movement seems to contain all things, the best of his life's experience,

surpassing beauty, infinite tenderness, with here and there a gleam of that rugged strength which characterised all his art. The major theme of the slow movement moves upon sublime heights, while the colloquy between the clarinet and strings of the middle section in the minor key again brings the music into touch with human feelings. If the last two movements do not reach quite so high as the first two, they are yet very beautiful, and without them expression would have been incomplete. The third contains both *andante* and *presto*, and is the last example of Brahms's favourite method of combining two mental attitudes in a single movement. It is very natural that he should turn to the form of variations for his *finale*, and that the work should end with a coda, formed from the beautiful subject of the first movement. Just before the end the clarinet, unaccompanied, rises to its highest notes and sinks with reiterations of the theme, in which the strings join, to an eloquent cadence.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORCHESTRA

It is scarcely surprising to find that the first important work in which Brahms made use of the orchestra was a pianoforte concerto; it illustrates again the fact that he clung to the piano as a sure means of expression, while his grasp of other instrumentation was uncertain. The Concerto in D minor, Op. 15, is the earliest completed orchestral work, although he referred in a letter to Schumann, written in 1854, to a symphony in D minor, of which the first movement was to be in 6–4 time. If this means that the symphony was turned into the concerto, it is all the more striking evidence of how loth he was to trust himself on unfamiliar ground; it seems likely, since the first symphony did not appear until more than twenty years later.

The first works for orchestra alone are the two Serenades in D and A respectively, Opp. 11 and 16. In spite of the early

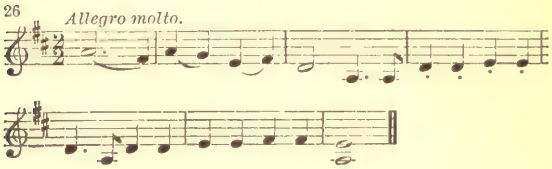
number of the first, they were both written in 1859, the year in which the concerto was produced at Leipzic.

The first contains seven movements—

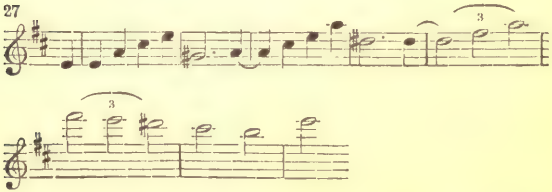
1. Allegro molto.
2. Scherzo. Allegro non troppo.
3. Adagio non troppo.
4. Menuetto I.
5. Menuetto II.
   (Menuetto I. repeated with other scoring.)
6. Scherzo. Allegro.
7. Rondo. Allegro.

Although the first movement is in sonata form, it has not the size or importance of thematic material which the first movement of a symphony would demand. Throughout the work there is a great deal of brightness and charming humour, while Brahms's own individuality occasionally shows itself; but in general it is rather a study in bygone methods than the work of a young and ardent composer approaching the orchestra for the first time. If it be compared with the first piano sonata, it is hardly possible to believe them to be the work of the same man. We have seen how daring and forceful, even domineering, is the latter, but this serenade bows in turn to each classical predecessor, Haydn, Schu-

bert, and the early manner of Beethoven, and accepts unhesitatingly each convention of orchestration that they used.



This is the first subject given out by horns over a drone bass. It is not difficult to trace its descent; it is of the kind that Beethoven inherited from Haydn. So are many other things, especially the tonic and dominant use of horns, trumpets, and drums in *tutti* passages, a tradition which Brahms took a long time to break through. When we come to the second subject, however, we find a theme more characteristic of its composer.



Its construction upon rising *arpeggii* and

its mixed rhythms mark it as Brahms's own, and the triplet figure in crotchets and in the codetta, which follows against a strong bass in plain crotchets, also foreshadows many of the beautiful effects of conflicting rhythms in his later orchestral and chamber music.

The second movement, *scherzo*, is among the most individual of the work. The theme given out in unison by the strings is of the flexible kind which admits of a lively development. Its first notes suggest the *scherzo* of Brahms's second piano concerto (cp. Example 55).

23

It is worked out at length with trio and repetition. The slow movement is less distinctive, and contains some thick scoring for wood-wind, flutes, oboes, and clarinets, doubling the parts, another old-fashioned tradition which Brahms did not readily relinquish. The two minuets, scored for a few wind and stringed instruments with a violoncello bass, are charming, and exactly catch the old character of the dance tune. They are sometimes played apart from the

rest of the work. The theme of the second *scherzo* bears a strong resemblance to that of the trio of Beethoven's ninth symphony, and its treatment is of course founded upon his methods. The *rondo* is based upon a tune with a jaunty rhythm such as Schubert might well have written, first given out by the violoncelli. It is developed in the orthodox manner, but one passage, the *cadenza* leading to the coda, makes an experiment in orchestration. The whole orchestra sustains chords *pp.*, which broaden out with a great *crescendo* and sink again to a *piano*, when the melodic movement is resumed.

The Second Serenade, Op. 16 in A, is less conventional. Written for small orchestra without violins, the score contains two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, viole, violoncelli, and bassi. It has therefore more the character of a piece of chamber music written in many parts; all the instruments are used with greater individuality, since none are there merely to fill the tone, and the absence of violins forced the composer to rely on upper wood-wind for treble melodies. From this experiment Brahms must have learnt a good deal of the art of orchestra-

tion, although its actual matter is of slight importance. It contains only five movements.

1. Allegro moderato.
2. Scherzo. Vivace.
3. Adagio non troppo.
4. Quasi menuetto (and trio).
5. Rondo. Allegro.

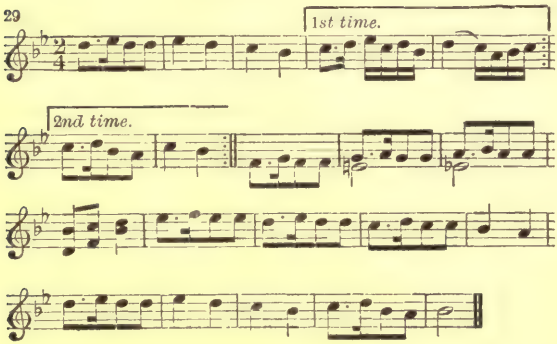
The first movement, in sonata form, is of a suave and gentle kind. The clarinets and bassoons give out the principal theme, a tune of alternate rise and fall, in which, however, the rise predominates, and the flutes continue the phrase upwards to a dominant cadence. There is a corresponding downward passage in undulating triplet crotchets in the minor key; all uneventful and simple, but with a certain charm which is felt through the whole movement and indeed the whole serenade. The *scherzo*, of the busy and excitable kind, may be compared with that of the first sestet. The *adagio* is quite the most interesting movement in the work; it contains not only beautiful melody, but occasionally passages of forcible expression. The first theme, given out by flute and clarinets in octaves, and imitated at a bar's distance by the second clarinet, is a pastoral melody in

12–8 rhythm, accompanied by long, waving phrases for the strings. When this has been developed, some strong contrasts of tone, in which the wind declaims fragments of the 12–8 rhythm over *tremulando* string passages, lead to the second subject, in A♭ major, another smooth melody. There is some development of the string phrase which accompanied the first theme, and, after restatement, a beautifully soft cadence on a major chord of A ends the poetic little movement. The *quasi-menuetto* is in 6–4 time, and the trio has the interest of being a kind of development of the first part, since it is founded on a fragment of the principal theme. The *rondo* calls for no special remark; its chief theme is founded on Brahms's favourite contrast of triplet quavers with pairs; it is developed in full and makes a genial ending to the serenade.

Brahms used the orchestra to accompany the *Ave Maria*, Op. 12, published in 1861, the year after the serenades, and wind instruments to accompany the Funeral Hymn, Op. 13 (see chap. vii.). Apart from these the orchestra finds no place in his work again until he began the *Deutsches Requiem* in 1865. From that time, when, as we have seen, his powers as a composer of chamber

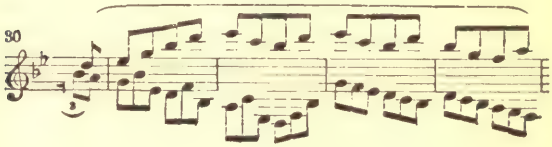
music had arrived at full maturity, the orchestra had a part in the larger choral works which appeared in fairly rapid succession, and form Opp. 50, 53, 54, and 55 (see chap. viii.).

At last we come to a work for orchestra alone, a set of variations on a theme by Haydn, Op. 56. It may be noticed that this work also appeared simultaneously in piano duet form, which seems to indicate that the orchestra was still no very essential feature in the composer's conception of the music. The theme is here quoted in full except for a few bars of coda, which contain reminiscences of the rhythm of bars 1 and 4.



It is to be found among some *divertimenti* for brass instruments, where it is called

"Chorale St. Antonii." Having stated the theme, harmonised in the most obvious way, and with studiously simple accompaniments, Brahms at once plunges into contrapuntal variations of it, the violins entering for the first time.

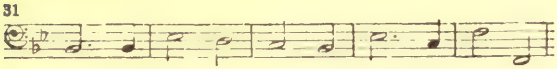


This first phrase shows him rejoicing in the combination of two strongly contrasted themes, which he immediately inverts and afterwards uses in a variety of different ways. It would not be very helpful, and it would take much space to describe each variation ; suffice it to say that each dwells upon some feature of the theme, rhythm or melody, adding new material to it, while the general outline of the original is preserved in form and harmony. Each is in itself a beautiful little miniature with an individuality of its own, grave or gay, thoughtful or impetuous, while the likeness to the parent theme is an additional interest to the listener.

The *finale*, however, must be specially

mentioned, since it is built entirely upon a "ground bass," five bars in length, derived from the first phrase of the original theme.

31



This is begun, *piano*, by the basses, and for the first twenty bars, that is through four repetitions, is treated in a serenely contrapuntal manner, with imitations and cumulative phrases added above one another in the style of church music. Then these restraints are broken down by emphatic chords on the strings answered by the wind, while the bass keeps up the persistent tread of the "ground." Presently the first violins introduce an imitation of the bass in diminution, and excitement rises till a *fortissimo* is reached, after which comes a tender counter-subject, played by the violas and oboes, accompanied by the violins, the bass still holding its uninterrupted course. A minor form of the "ground" is heard and passes to the upper parts, the basses then joining in vigorous counterpoint against it. With the return to the major key other reminiscences of the original theme appear

first in the wood-wind ; they grow in force until at last the tune is heard almost in its entirety against rushing semiquaver scales, and a magnificent climax is reached which ends the work.

This movement is important, not only as a masterly modern use of an ancient form, but because it may be taken as the predecessor of an even greater movement of the same kind, the *finale* to the fourth symphony.

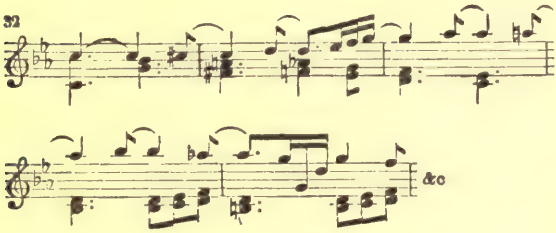
In these variations some of the conventions of scoring are still apparent, but on the whole Brahms shows a grip of the orchestra which tells that something greater must soon follow. They were published in 1873, and in 1876 the long-expected first symphony made its appearance.

Symphony I. in C minor, Op. 68, contains the following movements—

1. Introduction, un poco sostenuto, Allegro. C minor.
2. Andante sostenuto. E major.
3. Un poco Allegretto e grazioso. A flat major.
4. Adagio, C minor. Allegro non troppo ma con brio. C major.

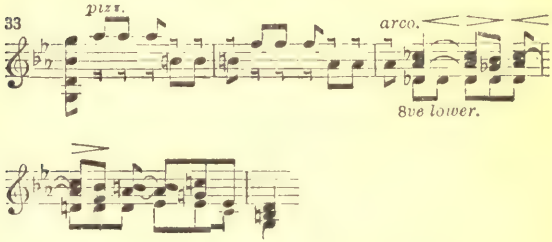
The scheme of keys, each movement a major third higher than the last, is remarkable. It is scored for the usual full orchestra,

including contrafagotto, four horns, two trumpets, drums, and, in the *finale* only, three trombones. The introduction opens with a double theme—that is to say, one in which two melodic features are of equal importance.

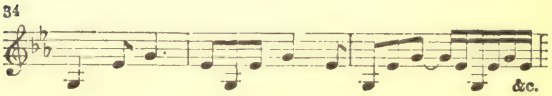


The second violin and viole are the parts quoted, but the former is doubled in the octaves above and below by the first violins and violoncelli, while all the wood-wind in their various octaves reinforce the divided viole. The contrabassi and contrafagotto and drum, meanwhile, reiterate a bass C in quavers. The effect is strange, and the thick sound of the wood-wind and insistent pedal bass, as well as the feeling of divided interest between the two features of the theme, reminds one of the scores of Bach, the beginning of the *Johannes Passion*, for

instance. This is soon broken by a cadence on the dominant, followed by—



The poignant intervals of the first two bars foreshadow a feature of the principal subject in the *allegro*, and the latter two bars answer them with beautiful and soothing expression ; the phrase is repeated upon other degrees of the scale, and the latter half extended with a *crescendo* which sinks again through an eloquent descending scale to this passage, played by strings.



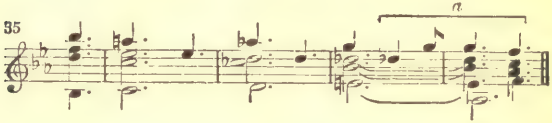
The *arpeggio*, using two members of the chord only, in this case the third and fifth, is one of Brahms's peculiar idioms. We shall see that it also belongs to the principal theme of the *allegro*. There is next a

repetition of Example 32, this time in the dominant, and then a codetta figure, first heard on the oboe, next on the violoncello, lingers over the dominant chord, till the composer suddenly summons his energy and leaps into the first subject of his *allegro*.

It has been necessary to analyse this introduction in detail, since it is the only case in the four symphonies in which Brahms followed the precedent set by Beethoven in his second, fourth, and seventh symphonies. Moreover, all the material of Examples 32 to 34 is the actual subject matter of the *allegro*, and together they make up the principal subject. The way in which the diverse material is welded into one forceful theme is among the most masterly things in modern music. Especially it should be noticed that fragments of the chromatic phrase, Example 32, form a bass for the *arpeggio* derived from Example 34.

With such pliable material to work upon, there is no check to Brahms's inventive genius, and the music plunges on, using these features in ever new relations. We may look back to the first piano sonata for a parallel to the first symphony; again the composer is possessed by the need for

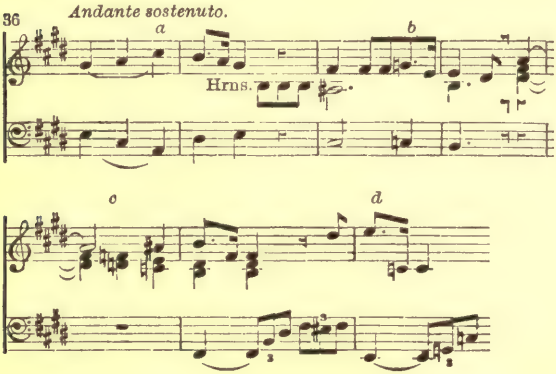
revealing all the possibilities of his theme, and no details of instrumental technique or effectiveness stay his course. The orchestral sound of much of this music is thick, even muddy, and yet it is no paper music, but speaks with a living intensity by sheer force of thematic development. No attempt can here be made to analyse it, but only to refer to a few more features.



No. 35, the expressive second subject, it will be seen, has some relation to the first subject; after thoughtful reiteration of the figure marked *a*, it is interrupted by an emphatic codetta. A terse figure of three quavers, of the utmost importance in the development section, is its basis. It intrudes itself roughly here, like a recall to reality from the tender dreams to which the second subject has led the listeners. One general characteristic of Brahms may very well be noted in this place, that his strongest passages are built, not, as with most modern composers, upon complicated harmonies, but on power-

ful sequences of common chords, which often serve as a means of modulation to extraneous keys. This is nowhere more strongly exemplified than in the development of this movement.

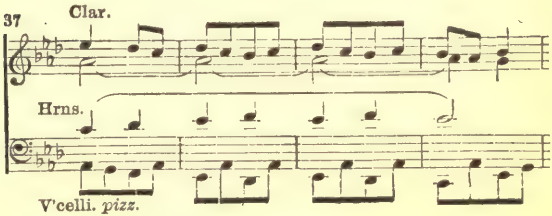
The *andante* and the *allegretto* are alike most refreshing. In the former, one need only grasp each feature of the lovely tune given out by the violins to follow the whole movement.



Like a beautiful face, it must be remembered as a whole, but to study each feature separately will help to this end. They are marked *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, for greater clearness. After the tune has been completed and ended with a cadence figure taken from *b*,

a transitional passage chiefly derived from *d* leads the way to a second theme, first heard on the oboe and then freely copied by the clarinet. It is a long sustained note followed by undulating passages of semiquavers accompanied by a syncopated rhythm on the strings, which first suggests the melody of *a*. The return to the principal theme (Example 36) is partly disguised by a variation, but a solo violin soon makes all luminously clear, and then each fragment of the tune is thoughtfully dwelt upon.

The *allegretto* has for principal theme a light-hearted little tune played by the wind over a *pizzicato* bass.

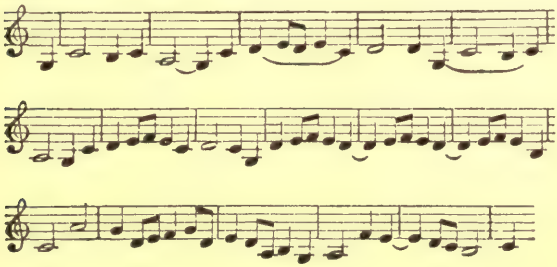


This fragment will recall to those who have heard it its freshness, like to a mild spring day. There are tributary themes which add new incident and ever-changing

interest; all is living and moving, yet nothing strenuous or earnest, though in the central episode (worked in with the music of the first part in the coda) there is a touch of mystery like a cloud passing across the face of the sun.

Another long introduction leads to the *finale;* its chief features are fragments of the principal theme (Example 38) alternating with passages for *pizzicato* strings, which begin *pp.*, and get louder and faster, till they break off upon an agitated *fortissimo* chord. Then follows a wonderful passage in which a horn call is heard above *tremulando* strings *con sordino.* It is pregnant with mystery, foreboding some great event, though what can scarcely be guessed, until the gorgeous tune, which opens the *allegro* and is its chief subject, reveals itself.

38



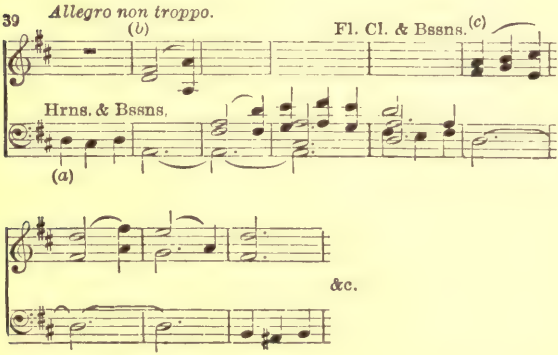
The form of the movement is very free; this tune reappears after all the other material, including a fine second subject in G, a gallant, swinging tune, has been heard, and before the actual development section. Here fragments of the first subject, as well as the material of the earlier episodes, are worked up in elaborate counterpoint, when their progress is suddenly arrested by the horn call of the introduction, played *fortissimo*. Various instruments take part in imitating it, and it then gives way before the reappearance of the second subject, now in C. The episode which followed it before is now further developed until a climax is reached in an ecstatic coda, built chiefly on fragments of the theme (Example 38), though it never appears in its completeness again. So ends this mighty first symphony.

Symphony II., in D major, Op. 73, appeared in the year after the first. Its four movements are as follows—

1. Allegro non troppo.
2. Adagio non troppo.
3. Allegretto grazioso. (Quasi Andantino.)
4. Allegro con spirito.

If it does not bear comparison with its predecessor for profundity of thought, it

surpasses it in grace and beauty. It stands between the first and third as does Beethoven's fourth between the "Eroica" and the great C minor. Perhaps Schumann's remark that the fourth stands "like a slender Greek maiden between two Norse giants" might be applied at any rate to the first movement of Brahms's second symphony. The subject matter reveals a gentle outline quite different to the rugged muscles of No. I.



Example 39 is the beginning of the work, and its three features, (*a*) the crotchets in the bass, (*b*) the lovely horn melody, and (*c*) its answer by wood-wind, are all essential to the development of the movement and

must be borne in mind. After dreamy, descending passages for violins and violas, some solemn chords for trombones, *piano*, alternate with repetitions of Example 39 (*a*) on the wood-wind, and then a second part of the first subject breaks forth with a flowing accompaniment in quavers.

This spontaneous tune leads to an episode in which Example 39 (*a*) is again prominent. Combined with quaver movement, it makes a new figure.

This leads the way straight to the second subject, played by the violoncelli, a delicious tune, which is tenderly repeated and enriched in orchestration. But Brahms could not give way entirely to such a mood, so, before the exposition ends, several episodes built on forcible melodic outlines and strong rhythms appear. The second subject returns before the double bar, and the cadence reflects its tender character. The

development is wholly occupied with the materials of the first subject (Examples 39 and 40). Its figures are subjected to every form of rhythmic alteration and combination. So full is the treatment that it is not surprising that Brahms shortens the *reprise*, and combines the two parts of the theme instead of letting them follow one another. All the later tunes are repeated, and an eloquent horn passage leads to a coda, which emphasises the expressive beauty of the first subject.

In the slow movement we find something of that complexity which was noticeable in parts of the first symphony. The principal theme is composed of two phrases heard together and of nearly equal importance. The violoncelli play a downward phrase against an upward one first given to the bassoons. That for the violoncelli, however, is the longer of the two, and fills twelve bars with melody which seems almost to require the complement of words to make its beauty fully articulate. At any rate it needs careful phrasing to make it clear. The composer has done this in the score, but, since players rarely achieve it, the movement is one of which listeners may easily fail to realise the beauty. The

same need for articulation in the playing is present in the episodes which follow. A lovely strain in placid 12-8 rhythm leads to the middle section, in which again a two-part theme is the important element. Brahms makes amends for the difficulty of grasping this music by repeating the first theme fully, and in the coda the different elements of both first and second sections are combined. The impression left is that here Brahms, more than in the slow movement of any other of the symphonies, struggled for complete expression of his complex artistic nature. If he only partially succeeded, that part is of such beauty as to be of the highest value.

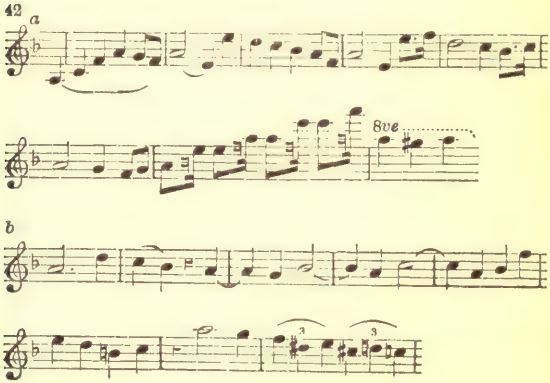
The *allegretto*, with its *presto* episodes, made in Brahms's favourite way by altering the rhythm of previous material, is very welcome. Its dainty grace recalls that of the early minuets in the serenade in D, but it is much more finished. Especially happy is the return to the original time, when the wind instruments anticipate the slower time, as if, impatient to play the delightful tune again, they have come in too soon. Over the *finale* we must not linger. It is built in regular form upon two strongly-contrasted themes, worked out

with Brahms's usual consistency, but in it there are more traces of old-fashioned influence than one would expect at the end of this symphony, especially in the orchestration and use of brass and drums.

Before considering the later symphonies mention must be made of the only other purely orchestral works of Brahms, the two overtures, called "The Tragic" and "The Academic," Opp. 80 and 81. The title of the latter is misleading, but due to the fact that it was written for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy presented to Brahms by the University of Breslau in 1881. Far from being academic, as we use the term, it is built upon three student songs, and two of these are of the most jocular type. It is more fully scored than any of Brahms's works, since in it he writes for piccolo and contrafagotto, in addition to the usual wood-wind, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba, 3 tympani, bass drum, cymbals and triangle, with the usual strings. It is unnecessary to quote from it since the themes are perfectly clear, and to describe Brahms's development of them would take more space than we dare devote; suffice it to say that, unlike many modern fantasias upon popular tunes, the interest and beauty of this over-

ture does not depend merely on the tunes themselves, but rests far more upon their skilful and humorous treatment.

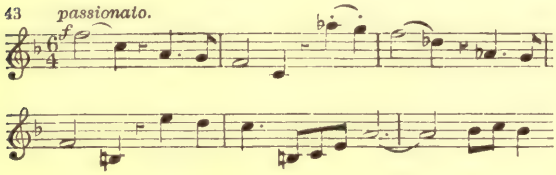
From "The Tragic" overture two quotations must be made—the first theme, the rise and fall of which is capable of infinite pathos or of resolute majesty, and the comforting second subject.



The Tragedy lies in the general mood of the music, which, in spite of noble and exhilarating passages, is fraught with a sense of doom which the utmost resolution cannot entirely combat. In it Brahms approaches as near to the pictorial as it was in his nature to do, and this approach

only serves to show how far he was from the descriptive attitude in instrumental music, which many modern composers adopt. This is the more important since we shall see later (chap. vi.) that in songs his powers of musical description showed themselves to be of a peculiarly vivid kind.

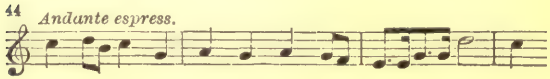
Symphony III., in F major, Op. 90, is the work of one who has all the resources he needs ready at command; it opens in the most daring manner upon two *forte* chords on the wind, and then the violins plunge into a subject which leaps over the *arpeggii* of F and D♭ with that joyous freedom which peculiarly belongs to Brahms.



It passes straight to another theme, in which a gradual ascent and *crescendo* culminate in an exultant *arpeggio;* it forms a modulating episode through the key of D♭ to that of A major, where the second subject proper occurs. Here the freedom

takes another mood and calms down to a melody of gracious outline upon a waltz-like rhythm. This is succeeded by the happiest dialogue between the oboes and clarinets, and here it may be noticed that the scoring of this symphony attains to a clearness of colouring which makes it remarkable among Brahms's orchestral works. It flows on, one charming figure succeeding another, until the double bar is reached, where the giant *arpeggio* of the first subject begins to stride about. It does not, however, like the first subject of the second symphony, take complete command of the development section; on the contrary, the second subject is still prominent, but the first subject gradually gains the ascendency, and after very short development appears again in its original form. As if to make up for the shortness of the development, an extended coda treats the first subject very fully, and a *piano* ending is unexpected.

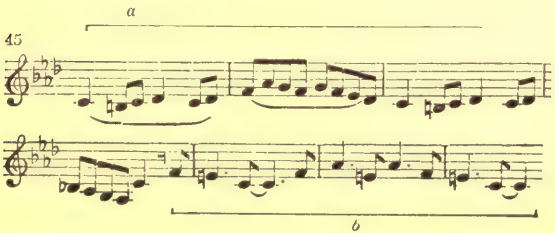
The theme of the slow movement is given out by clarinets and bassoons and is very simple; it occupies almost the whole movement.



After its full statement another theme is started in G by the same instruments, but it occupies comparatively little attention, a return being made almost at once to free variations of this beautiful tune.

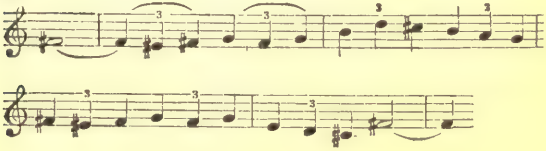
A third movement *poco allegretto* is scored for small orchestra—that is to say, strings, wood-wind, and two horns. Its theme is given out by the violoncelli, while the upper strings gracefully embroider an accompaniment of *arpeggio* figures. Nothing could be clearer to follow nor more charmingly lyrical in character, though perhaps it is the least forcible movement in the symphonies of Brahms.

The last movement is the noblest of the symphony. The strings creep about *sotto voce* with one of those flexible themes which can be used to almost any purpose. It is in F minor, and has some resemblance to the first theme of the piano quintet in the same key (see Example 19, *a*).

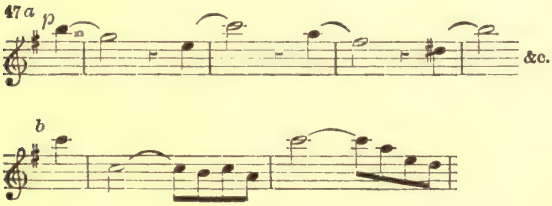


This is taken up by the wood-wind and then succeeded by another ominous sounding theme of strong rhythm, which, however, is soon broken in upon by the insistent rhythm of the part of Example 45 marked *b*. This, with some further reference to *a*, forms an episode leading to the gorgeous second subject, a theme which sounds particularly rich, played as it is at first by violoncelli and horns in unison. The development is occupied, as may be expected, with the first theme, Example 45, and its dependant, and their fragments are combined and contrasted in a way which cannot be described. At last, after a *fortissimo* climax comes the second subject again, and after its recapitulation, a coda, in which the themes of the first subject are treated in whimsical fashion, the symphony ends *pianissimo* in the major key. Amongst the changes which the theme undergoes in the coda one may be quoted. It is very distinctive.

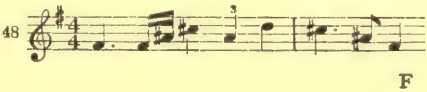
46



Symphony IV., in E minor, Op. 98, followed quickly upon the third as the second followed the first, again with very different results. While the third is remarkable for the spontaneity of its themes and the warmth of their treatment, the fourth is admirable for the symmetry of its architecture. Like Nos. II. and III., it begins at once with its principal theme, a melody which, however, does not make so immediate an appeal as do the first subjects of its predecessors.



The simplicity makes it amenable to variation, and at every return to it some new contrapuntal feature is added, which gives interest even if the theme cannot become an inspiring one. When it has been expanded, its flowing course is interrupted by this emphatic figure—

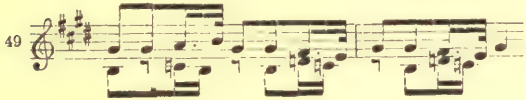


played by horns and wood-wind, succeeded by another smooth tune, scored first, as was the second subject of the last movement of No. III., for violoncelli and horns in unison ; it is taken up by violins, but soon Example 48 again intrudes itself and is, with the first subject, the real matter for development. One more feature, a long *arpeggio* figure played by strings, while the wind sustains its harmony and the trumpets softly reiterate the repeated semiquavers which begin Example 48, is a piece of mystic sound which arrests attention. Its place in the development is also important.

In this last symphony Brahms discarded the conventional double bar and repeat and the end of the exposition, and its place is only marked by a short transition back to the key of E minor and the reappearance of the first subject in its simple form. Soon, however, it is broken into fragments and modulation into the flat keys begins. The development is concise but very complex, and is largely made of elaborate *stretti* of Example 48. The returning passage contains the most positive beauty. In it strings and wood-wind pass the figures of Example 47 *b*, from one to another over sustained *pp.* chords which gradually

modulate back to the dominant of E, and then the first subject appears in a kind of augmented form, accompanied by the mysterious *arpeggio* spoken of above.

The slow movement is the most loveable in the work. It has a haunting and plaintive melody which centres upon the major third of the key, thus—



This peculiarity makes it slip very easily into the key of C by treating the original keynote as itself the major third. Brahms uses two horns in C, and begins as though his movement were to be in C, but with the entry of the strings, the horns still holding the E, the movement turns into that key, and the tune appears as quoted above. It approaches very nearly to full first-movement form, since there is a second subject which appears first in B major and afterwards in the tonic key. In a very beautiful coda the curious C major effect is heard just before the ending.

A movement called *allegro giocoso* fills the place of the *scherzo*. It is the only move-

ment in the symphonies (there is more than one in the chamber music) with a touch of that boisterous jocularity which seems, when Brahms uses it, to have been copied from Beethoven rather than to have been something quite his own. It swings along with unabated good humour, though with no great distinction of theme. Perhaps it was the fact that he was about to leave the beaten track so entirely in the last movement, that made Brahms give to this the complete outline of first-movement form. The coda, begun by a passage twenty-five bars long, in which the drum murmurs upon the dominant a rhythm characteristic of the first subject, reminds one again of Beethoven's treatment of the *scherzo*.

In the last movement the trombones enter for the first time, and, reinforced by wood-wind and horns, boldly announce the text for discourse.

The whole movement is occupied with variations of this theme; sometimes, as here, it appears as a melody, sometimes as

a bass, while more often it is suggested by a melody of wider range. It is often rather implied than expressed, but never really absent, and its influence is always felt beneath the wealth of melody and contrapuntal device applied to it.

In spite of the ruthless way in which he follows his theme, Brahms is not here oblivious to questions of effect. At the third repetition of the theme a counter-subject is added in the wood-wind, which to some extent takes the place of a second subject, since it appears again more richly scored near the end of the work. After fifteen variations the re-entry of the wind, as at the first statement, sums up the situation, and recalls the audience to the realisation of the subject. From this point the accumulation of device begins again and becomes more elaborate till it reaches a coda, before which four bars of *ritardando* and *crescendo* prepare for the final outburst of the last few variations.

This great movement ended Brahms's symphonic work. As a summary of his extraordinary powers of intellectually developing a theme it is monumental, and as a piece of sound it is overpowering. It is music about which it is not worth to ex-

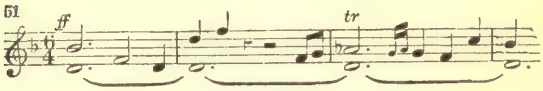
press opinions of like or dislike. Those who cannot appreciate must be content to bow before it as the product of a mind into whose workings it is not yet possible for them to enter.

CHAPTER V

THE CONCERTOS

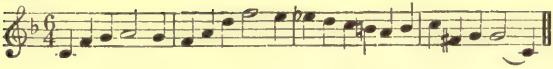
We have already seen that the first piano concerto was among Brahms's earliest experiments in orchestration. It was an effort at the expression of his artistic convictions, through a medium not naturally congenial to him, at a time when such expression was probably made more difficult by the shock he had sustained through the sad death of his best friend, Robert Schumann. It is well known that when Brahms first played it at Leipzic in 1859 it was received with a storm of abuse, which was not merely the usual outpouring of near-sighted critics over a work which was new to them, but represented the genuine difficulty of hearers in discovering beauty in it. Even at the present day it is no great heresy for devoted Brahms lovers to shake their heads over the first piano concerto. Throughout the first movement a struggle is going on. There is

something argumentative about the first theme which, with its tortuous *arpeggio* on a chord of the sixth and its shake on A flat, dominates the movement.



In spite of the individuality of the movement, Brahms keeps very close to classical procedure, and opens with a *ritornello* for orchestra which introduces this with two subsidiary themes of a more tranquil kind. The piano enters with quite other matter in which quavers, grouped in pairs, gradually gain in intensity till an *arpeggio* over dominant harmony culminates in a series of shakes on descending degrees of the scale, which are a feature of the principal theme. After the other themes have been treated by piano with orchestra, the second subject proper is arrived at and played by piano alone in F major. Even the inveterate enemies of this concerto must acknowledge that this is a beautiful theme. Its second part has been heard before in the *ritornello,* but it receives fuller treatment here after the orchestra have repeated the dignified first phrase.

52 *a*

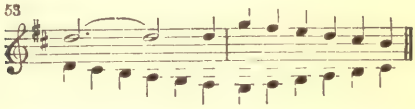


b

The development begins with a rushing downward passage in double octaves; this extends the *arpeggio* phrase of the first subject, which then becomes the matter for discussion, while the piano has passages, both in octaves and in broken chord passages, difficult and not particularly effective. It is largely the thinness of sound combined with the complexity of development which makes this section hard to enjoy. There is strife which may become a weariness, but even so there is the grandeur of conquest at the return, where the first subject comes in over the D bass, not on B flat, as in Example 51, but on E, a major supertonic chord played *fortissimo* by the piano. In the *reprise* there is variety of scoring until the second subject appears, now in D major played as before by piano alone.

The slow movement is simple in struc-

ture and beautiful in theme. The strings and bassoons begin placidly with a passage making use of the downward scale on which the principal theme, as played later by the piano, is founded.

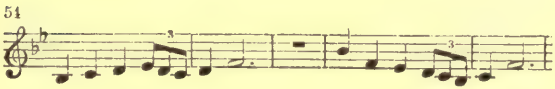


It is still in 6–4 time, but its feeling is quite different from that of the first movement; the struggle is gone, and it is on a level of serene contemplation. The clarinets in thirds propose a second theme which the orchestra treats with more energy, while the piano is for the first time the accompanist; then the first theme returns, and in its further development the sweeping *arpeggii* for the piano are worth noticing and comparing with those in the slow movement of the piano quartet in A major, Op. 26 (chap. iii.). A *cadenza* for the piano precedes a short coda which ends with reference to Example 53.

The third and last movement is a *rondo* on a theme of which an upward *arpeggio* of D is the basis against a bass of bustling semiquavers. It is much more straight-

forward than the first movement, and its theme has a genial swing which it is quite easy to enjoy even if some of its later developments are rather obscure.

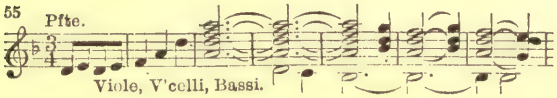
When Brahms next wrote a concerto it was the now famous, we might almost say popular, one for violin, first played by Joachim in 1879. Two years later the second concerto for piano followed, and may be discussed before that for the violin, since it is natural to compare the early and the late work for the same instrument. This was composed when Brahms's career was at its height, and is contemporary with the two overtures, Opp. 80 and 81. It is therefore only to be expected that he should have got over the angularities of style which made the first concerto hard to accept. Its very beginning is more propitious; instead of the insistent *arpeggio* theme, an heroic phrase of diatonic build is announced by the horn. It is the principal theme of the movement—



and immediately the piano enters and an-

swers each of these phrases with another, spread over an *arpeggio*, first of the tonic then of the dominant. In this beginning there is something broad and dignified and particularly wholesome. The immediate entry of the piano and the fact that eighteen bars of music for piano alone follow before the orchestra presents the themes in their entirety is for Brahms unconventional, since his love of classical tradition was so strong. In the *ritornello* which follows most of the material of the movement is given; a majestic presentment of the chief theme, a suggestion of the expansive second subject followed by a codetta passage of martial rhythm. A return to the principal subject opens the way for the official entrance of the piano, and it begins gallantly upon a variant of the theme, as though it had forgotten its previous entrance. Brahms had certainly found more pliable material for this concerto; the appearance, for instance, of the phrase quoted, Example 54, necessarily illumines the most complex passage, but his method of combining the piano with the orchestra is often baffling, as in the earlier work. The virtuoso of the piano makes his instrument compete with the greater capacities of the orchestra

by subduing the latter and writing brilliant solo passages; Brahms weaves the solo in as an important part of a single scheme, a large number of the complexities of which fall to its share, and demand from the pianist the utmost powers of technique and still more of intellect to unravel them. The story that Brahms told Billroth that he made this concerto contain four movements instead of three, the additional one being the second, because the first movement was so simple (*simpel*), only shows how difficult it was for him to put himself on the level of his audience and to hear with their ears. The *scherzo* as a matter of fact is a relief, for, although it is long and elaborately worked out, it is not, like the first movement, difficult to follow. Its principal theme introduces a fresh spirit of energy and strong life.



It is in the form of *scherzo* and trio, with a repetition in which the subjects are freshly scored and to some extent freshly treated, though the general matter is the same as

at first. The theme of the trio is in D major, and is like a joyous peal of bells.

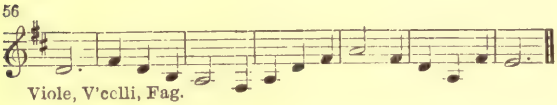
The slow movement returns to the key of B♭, and is almost entirely developed from a single beautiful tune first played by a violoncello solo. It may be compared with the slow movement of the D minor concerto, since it is written in 6–4 time and a downward scale in crotchets again forms the basis of accompaniment to the tune. Though there are several episodes which give variety, there is nothing which is of sufficient importance to be called a second subject, and this makes it remarkable among Brahms's slow movements.

The *finale,* in a free *rondo* form, has, like the *finale* to the D minor concerto, a theme which knits it together and makes it to some extent understandable even to the uninitiated, and it is far more genial and light-hearted than the earlier one. Some of the other episodes are delightful specimens of Brahms's melodic power.

Possibly the nature of the violin itself, to say nothing of the violinist for whom the concerto was written, is largely responsible for the fact that the work in D major, Op. 77, attains to greater clarity of expression than either of the piano concertos.

On the piano Brahms expressed his own complex mind, but in writing for the violin, on which the same technical complexities were impossible, and in writing for another to interpret, he rose above himself to that universal expression which is the rare privilege of the greatest alone. The first theme is again an *arpeggio* figure, and resembles that of the second symphony in the same key. It is answered in the same tranquil way, giving a sense of reserved force which in this case is soon called into action.

56

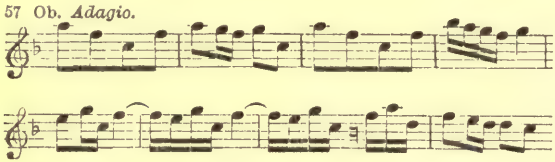


The second half of the tune, played by the plaintive oboe to accompaniment for strings in quavers, is a diatonic and ascending phrase leading to a vigorous passage in unison, which reveals the latent strength of Example 56. Two more fragments of melody, the one exquisitely simple, the other of insistent rhythm, follow. Both these are important, but the real second subject is not heard in the *ritornello*. The violin makes a most eloquent entrance. Beginning on the open D, it soars upwards

through the minor key to the high F♮, from which it descends in an *arpeggio* of B♭, suggesting the principal theme, but soon hastening into a cadenza-like passage which is accompanied by the orchestra with fragments from the tunes already heard. The passage is to some extent analogous to the opening of Beethoven's violin concerto, but much longer, and finally the appearance of the first subject in the high register of the solo instrument is also like Beethoven. As each theme appears, it is so clothed with characteristic ornament by the violin that the individual voice of the solo instrument is always distinct. It has been said that this concerto is not violin technique, but the charge can scarcely mean more than that the ornaments are not those which lie most naturally upon the four strings. In the hands of a master of technique such as Joachim, who produced it, or Kreisler, whose fine interpretation has spread its fame in England, it represents with Beethoven's the most perfect combination of the two principles of solo and concerted music.

The slow movement is built upon one of those rare tunes for the beauty of which it is difficult to account, but which, as soon

as heard, stamp themselves upon the memory as of surpassing loveliness. It is played first by the oboe.



The second phrase has in the chromatic descent of three notes a slight affinity to Beethoven's Romanze in G for violin and orchestra, but had not the whole mood of this movement something in common with it the fact would be scarcely worth mentioning. The phrase itself is important, since it forms an accompanying figure to the middle section, when the violin takes up a new and more florid theme.

With the placid ending of the second movement the subject of the third, given out at once by the solo instrument, contrasts strongly. Both the rhythm and the double stopping give it a certain rough force; it is a theme which every one will know again. In hearing it one is strongly reminded of the rhythms of his Hungarian Dances. As if pleased with this jolly tune, Brahms works it through a good many pages

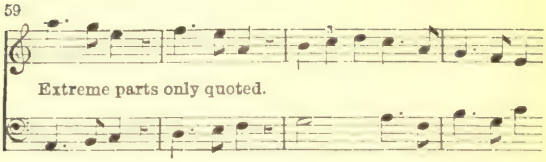
before introducing any new material. When a new subject does appear it is ushered in by an upward scale in octaves played by the violin *fortissimo, energicamente,* which, with a downward one on the basses, forms the motive of a contrasting episode. There is another episode, a playful little figure, introduced by the solo violin later, as is each theme in this movement.

It completes the material, and from its appearance to the end there is no page of the score, indeed scarcely a bar, which is not traceable to one of these three simple elements. Still, the music is always new and the effect fresh and spontaneous. There is no feeling of ingenuity, or that the composer is delighting merely in skilful combinations and permutations of the material. Its course is a perfectly natural one. The movement culminates in a *cadenza* before the coda, not written out, but, as in the old-fashioned concertos, left to the discretion of the player. That composed by Joachim is generally and very fitly played.

The fourth and last concerto appeared in 1887, just ten years before Brahms's death. It is for two instruments, the violin and violoncello, and was first played publicly in that year at Cologne by Dr. Joachim and Professor Hausmann. In planning it, Brahms followed the precedent of the older *concerti grossi*, in which a group of solo players were contrasted with the orchestra. The form had survived to the time of Beethoven, who in his earlier years wrote a triple concerto for violin, violoncello, and piano; but Brahms is unique in combining this old practice with modern treatment of the concerto form. The double concerto is in A minor, Op. 102, and begins with a vigorous theme, four bars of which are given out by full orchestra. It is a fragment of the first subject; thereupon the violoncello enters *in modo d'un recitativo* upon the low D, and sweeps in an *arpeggio* over the best of its compass. A *cadenza* passage follows, in which the violin joins, and by the free use of double stopping and *arpeggii* they produce together wonderfully full harmony. This, like the first entrance of the piano in the second concerto, is preliminary to the orchestral *tutti*, which now breaks in *for-*

tissimo and treats the first subject at length.

59



The exposition of material is here very complete. A tributary theme, built on a syncopated figure and giving place at its climax to a rhythm of quavers in triplets, very important later, leads to the second subject, a tune capable of great range of expression. Here it appears in an exuberant *forte* with a semiquaver accompaniment, but later, when the solo violoncello introduces it, it is with more tender expression. It is quoted below as it there appears in the key of C major. When the solo instruments enter with the first theme, the striking phrase, quoted as Example 59, is passed by in order to develop a figure of four quavers which the violoncello has introduced.

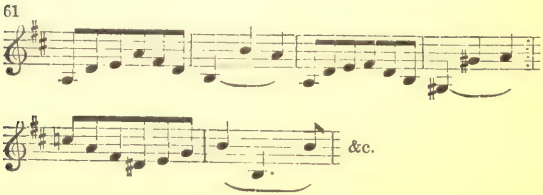
60

Every one who knows the expressive power of phrasing on the stringed instruments will appreciate the eloquence of this phrase of the second subject. Each solo instrument and eventually the orchestra have the joy of playing it. The development, beginning with the first subject, passes to the figure of triplet quavers led by the solo violoncello. Later, remarkable passages of shakes for the two solo instruments against orchestral syncopations are important, after which various fragments of the principal theme again become prominent and more insistent until its complete return in the original key.

These are the main structural outlines of the movement. Its effect as a piece of music cannot be described so concisely. At the first few hearings an impression may be gained that there is something fine going on, which is only made definite at such lucid moments as where first and second subjects appear. Some have described it as of a grey hue, and have complained of its colourlessness. This is probably because of the difficulty of grasping the beauty of the passages for the two solo instruments. As other concertos combine principles of solo and orchestral music, this combines those

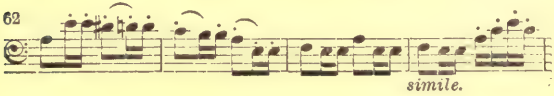
of chamber music with the orchestra. At first our ears find it difficult to accommodate themselves to the contrast of the comparatively thin tone of combined solo instruments with the orchestra. Once the work is thoroughly known, however, innumerable beauties, hitherto unsuspected, become clear. We learn to listen both for the broad outlines and brave colours of orchestral effect and for the intimate and subtle variations of tone which belong to chamber music. Eventually, we gain a wider range of expression than in either sonata or symphony, although at first we missed the satisfaction of both.

The beauty of the slow movement, however, cannot be mistaken. After two bars in which horns and wood-wind anticipate the first four notes of the theme, dwelling with thoughtful pauses on them, this tune is played in octaves by the solo instruments, supported by a rich accompaniment of orchestral strings.



It should be noticed that here again the *arpeggio* and not the scale is the source of its inspiration. It is completed and brought to a reposeful cadence, when the wood-wind, with an abrupt modulation to F major, introduces a new theme, this time of a diatonic kind. The solo instruments add an answering phrase thereto and then embroider the wood-wind theme with graceful figures without disturbing its serene simplicity. There is here just sufficient contrast to make the reappearance of the first lovely subject wholly welcome, and to form material for a short coda, which contains reminiscences of all that has gone before.

The solo violoncello shakes off this mood with the dancing rhythm of the last movement, which it announces accompanied by the lower strings. The violin takes it up, the accompaniment being of the lightest kind, and soon the whole orchestra is dancing to its energetic measure.



This movement includes a surprising number of fresh tunes. It is as different as possible from the last of the violin con-

certo, which, as we saw, is evolved entirely from its principal theme with a few subsidiary figures. Here, after the first subject (Example 62) we get a regular second subject in C major, and in the central section two other themes, all quite distinct from one another, though all consistent in light-hearted gaiety. It produces an exhilarating effect, which, after the repetition of the two themes, reaches an exciting climax in a brilliant coda on the rhythm of the first subject, the work ending in the major key. It is Brahms's last work for orchestra; the only instrumental works which followed it were the last violin sonata, the second and greatest string quintet, and the music for the clarinet.

CHAPTER VI

SONGS FOR ONE OR TWO VOICES

BRAHMS has been acknowledged universally as the successor of Schubert as a song-writer. If his fund of vocal melody was less inexhaustible than that of his predecessor, or if it fits the words less closely and naturally, Brahms achieved in his songs an artistic finish which Schubert probably would never have attained even had he lived to an equal age. It is not difficult to discern the cause of this. *À propos* of a song by Henschel, Brahms said to him: "Let it rest, let it rest, and keep going back to it and working at it until it is completed as a finished work of art, until there is not a note too much or too little, not a bar you could improve upon."

The rigorous application of this principle to his own work had the result, that after a life of sixty-four years Brahms left rather more than two hundred songs and duets, whereas Schubert, who died at thirty years,

had composed between six and seven hundred.

Solo song stands to the rest of Brahms's vocal music as does his piano music to his instrumental works. It is his starting-point of vocal expression. Among the early piano sonatas comes Op. 3, *Six Songs*, all of which are distinguished for simplicity and purity of melody. No. 1, "Liebestreu," is most often sung and perhaps the finest, but the smooth melody and simple accompaniment of No. 2, "Liebe und Frühling" are very characteristic, as is also the rising *arpeggio* to the words "Weit über das Feld" in No. 4.

Op. 6, *Six Songs*, are a little more elaborate, but not difficult. The set begins with the "Spanisches Lied," of which an insistent figure of accompaniment is an important feature. The same kind of device, though to very different purpose, is used in the last one, the beautiful "Nachtigallen schwingen," in which the doubled thirds of the accompaniment suggest the warble of the nightingale's song.

Op. 7, *Six Songs*.—Nos. 1 and 2, "Treue Liebe" and "Parole" are further instances of Brahms's skill in using rhythmic figures to give character to his accompaniments.

Nos. 3, 4, and 5 are tiny little songs of the simplest *Volkslied* type, and No. 6, Uhland's "Heimkehr," only twenty-one bars, of which five are piano introduction, is a wonderful instance of concentrated expression of melody and harmony within a small space.

Amateurs and others, who rightly fear to attempt Brahms's more difficult songs, may find in these early sets many which they can sing effectively, and they should sing them until they are much better known than they are now.

Op. 14, *Lieder und Romanzen*, eight in number, give further opportunities of the same kind; they are called *Volkslieder*, which means that they exactly follow the pattern of the folk-song, with very simple and yet characteristic accompaniments.

Op. 19, *Five Songs*.—No. 1, "Der Kuss," is noticeable for the irregular length of its phrases, which follow the words closely. Nos. 2 and 3, "Scheiden und Meiden" and "In der Ferne," by Uhland, begin with phrases as similar as the varying metres of the poems will allow, but are differently developed. In the latter the change to the major key is a distinguishing beauty. No. 4, "Der Schmied," is noteworthy for its exultant melody and its accompaniment,

which suggests the beat of the hammer upon the anvil. No. 5, "An eine Æolsharfe," is a more extended song; the presence of a free recitative is a new feature in Brahms's songs, and one in which he did not very frequently indulge.

Op. 20, *Three Duets*, do not differ at all in texture from solo songs, except for the presence of the additional voice part. They are for soprano and alto voices, singing largely in thirds and sixths with little independence of part-writing. Two of them are German versions of two parts of the old ballad, "Love will find out the Way." The third is "Die Meere." All are pleasing in much the same way as are Mendelssohn's duets.

Op. 28, *Four Ducts*, for alto and baritone, are more important. Here the voices are used in dialogue fashion, and have greater independence. In No. 1, "Die Nonne und der Ritter," the two sing alternately through nearly the whole song. The final phrase for alto alone is its most eloquent point. Nos. 2 and 4 contain delightfully intertwined dialogue, and are of a light-hearted kind. No. 3, "Es rauschet das Wasser," is a descriptive love song of the kind most congenial to Brahms.

Op. 32, *Lieder und Gesänge*, introduces us to a larger kind of song than any of the earlier ones. No. 1, "Wie rafft ich mich auf in der Nacht," is expressive of that rough power which is characteristic of Brahms's writing in the minor mode. No. 2 is a broad melody which belongs more to Brahms than to the words of the poem, which express a kind of passion not native to him. Nos. 3 and 4 are short songs, but No. 4, "Der Strom, der neben mir verrauschte," is very forcible within its small limits. The last of the five, which make the second book of this opus, is sung by every one; it is "Wie bist du meine Königin," a truly inspired melody, but not so far removed above the earlier ones that it should be always sung and they never. For beauty of melody both Nos. 7 and 8 are quite fit to stand beside it. Perhaps the publication of selected songs has done more mischief in causing certain ones to be passed over than it has done good in popularising others. If people who want to sing "Wie bist du meine Königin" would buy Op. 32, their enterprise would be rewarded.

Op. 33, *Romanzen aus Tieck's Magelone*, is, if we except the *Vier ernste Gesänge*, the only song cycle which Brahms wrote. Its

appearance marks the maturity of his powers as a song-writer, just as the piano quintet, which stands next to it, shows his mastery in chamber music. The lyrics, fifteen in all, are splendidly set, with complete command of the arts of declamation and melody, and the power to heighten the effect by forcible and sometimes even descriptive accompaniment, as in the galloping rhythm of No. 1. Above the technique of expression stands the variety of emotion here displayed. In the first two a manly vigour and the joy of action, in No. 3 the languishing sensations of love, dejection in No. 4, exuberance in No. 5, one of the most popular of the songs—"So willst du des Armen dich gnädig erbarmen?" Some of the songs are of great length, for instance No. 6, and in these Brahms's characteristic methods of abrupt and subtle modulation are much used. In No. 6 there is a great variety of musical material. No. 9, "Ruhe Süssliebchen," is a beautiful and peaceful song, and it is followed by the ruthless "Verzweiflung," a song of immense power. No. 14 wonderfully describes and is described by its first words, "Wie froh und frisch mein Sinn sich hebt," and the last song, "Treue Liebe," sums up

the whole with a beautiful and a healthy ending.

Op. 43, *Four Songs*, contains two of Brahms's most lovely songs, "Von ewiger Liebe" and "Die Mainacht." The noble words of the first appealed strongly to Brahms, and produced not only a beautiful melody but a magnificent climax in which the eternal nature of pure love is shown. The second is one of, if not the most beautiful of Brahms's descriptive songs; we shall see later how he loved to set poems which dwell upon the beauties of nature. The other two songs are of less importance. No. 3 is an arrangement from Op. 41, No. 1, for male voices, and No. 4 is a quaint setting of Uhland's ballad, "Das Lied vom Herrn von Falkenstein." We come next to four consecutive opus numbers of songs.

Op. 46, *Four Songs*, are, with the exception of No. 3 (to which the word is hardly applicable), all charming melodies of no very intense emotion. The type of No. 3 is described by its title, "Die Schale der Vergessenheit."

Op. 47, *Five Songs*, is a particularly happy opus, since it contains "Botschaft," a dreaming love song, followed by the more ardent "Liebesgluth." "Sonntag" amongst

so many love songs is very refreshing, since in simplest manner it deals with the homely sorrow of the lover banished during the week.

> "So hab' ich doch die ganze Woche
> Mein feines Liebchen nicht geseh'n."

Its musical range, too, is bounded by the simple limits of the diatonic scale. "O liebliche Wangen," also contained in this opus, is popular for the exciting climax to the melody repeated in each verse.

Op. 48, *Seven Songs*, although they deal chiefly with false lovers and forlorn maidens, do not enter the depths of disappointed love. Each little song is so short and concise that they are akin to the old folk-songs which could relate tragic experiences without entering into them. Rather more intimate is the last song "Herbstgefühl."

Op. 49, *Five Songs*, has the honour to contain the most popular of all Brahms's songs, "Wiegenlied." Again one wishes that those who want a copy of it would buy the whole opus. They would find something nearly as charming in "An ein Veilchen"; they might learn to appreciate the splendid upward sweep of melody which begins "Sehnsucht" and the sunset colour-

ing of "Abenddämmerung," an intensely beautiful piece of reflective music, which the composer himself loved the best of all his songs.

In Op. 57, *Eight Songs*, we have a number of good things rarely heard. The first is a flowing melody with broad and simple modulations. It is worth naming for this reason, that Brahms's tortuous vocal passages, resulting from difficult harmonic progressions sometimes, with a certain justice, retard the popularity of his songs. The last, "Unbewegte laue Luft," is a striking instance of his use of description. The poem speaks of the still hush upon all nature, and then breaks out with the words—

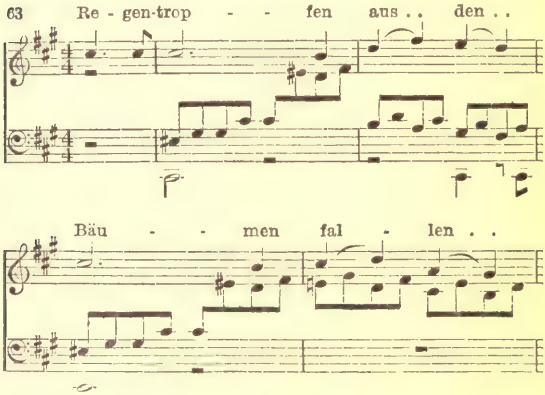
> "Aber im Gemüthe schwillt
> Heissere Begierde mir."

Brahms seizes upon the contrast and paints both moods alike forcibly.

Op. 58, *Eight Songs*, contains "Blinde Kuh" and "Die Spröde," which for lightness of handling may be compared with "Sonntag." "O komme, holde Sommernacht" vies with "Mainacht" for clear beauty of description. To this the special form of the *arpeggio* figures of accompaniment largely contributes. No. 5, "Schwer-

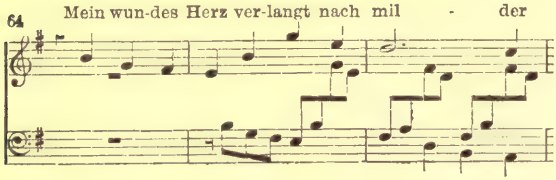
muth," is a powerful piece of writing, and No. 8, "Serenade," has a straightforward charm, largely gained by the eloquent transition from the key of A minor to F major in the middle section.

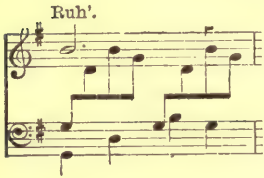
In Op. 59, *Eight Songs*, Nos. 3 and 4, "Regenlied" and "Nachklang," are conspicuous. They are built upon one theme, which is also that of the *finale* of the violin



sonata in G, Op. 78 (see chap. i.). In No. 5, "Agnes," Brahms uses his favourite plan of gaining an unusual rhythm by alternating a bar of triple with one of duple time. No. 7, "Mein wundes Herz," besides being a beautiful song, is interest-

ing to musicians for the way in which the accompaniment is made out of imitations of the voice part. The beginning is worth quoting on this account.





Op. 61, *Four Duets*, for soprano and alto, are more interesting than the earlier opus for these voices. No. 1, "Die Schwestern," is lightsome and charming, but the most intimate is No. 2, "Kloster Fräulein."

Op. 63, *Nine Songs*, begins with the ardent "Frühlingstrost," which is followed by "Erinnerung," one of the most loveable melodies which Brahms ever wrote. "An ein Bild" and "An die Tauben" complete the first book. The second contains two

"Junge Lieder" and three songs called "Heimweh." Of the "Junge Lieder" the first is the spirited "Meine Liebe ist grün," and the three home-loving songs are, as ever when Brahms touched on this subject, most heartfelt.

Op. 66, *Five Duets*, are for soprano and alto. The first two, both called "Klänge," contain the most beautiful expression. In No. 4, "Jägerlied," a subtle effect is produced by the contrast of the rhythms of 2–4 and 6–8 time in the two parts.

Op. 69, *Nine Songs*, contains five short songs sufficiently simple to be sung with pleasure by amateurs, of which the most beautiful is "Des Liebsten Schwur"; the second book of four is on a rather larger scale, and two of its numbers are specially remarkable. No. 6, "Vom Strande," is the call of a maiden for her lover across the stormy sea. The accompaniment is pictorial, using sweeping *arpeggii* and similar passages to suggest the ebb and flow of the waves, yet here and elsewhere Brahms managed such effects in so masterly a way that they never become common. In the most graphic of his songs, many of which, like this one and "Mädchenfluch" (No. 9), occur among the middle opus

numbers, he became so possessed by the poetic subject that such details made their appearance as appropriate expression, not as a conscious depicting of events or objects.

Op. 70, *Four Songs*, and Op. 71, *Five Songs*, contain no very remarkable numbers, though they include such dainty things as the "Lerchengesang" and "Abendregen" (Nos. 2 and 4, Op. 70), with "An den Mond" and "Minnelied" (Nos. 2 and 5, Op. 71).

In Op. 72, *Five Songs*, is "Alte Liebe" and "Sommerfäden," in which the two-part accompaniment twines in and out like gossamer threads. No. 4, "Verzagen," may be compared to "Vom Strande" (Op. 69, No. 6); it has a certain similarity of subject and of workmanship. The last of the set, "Unüberwindlich," has as a musical text a quotation from Scarlatti of two bars length.

Op. 84, *Five Songs*, are all dialogues, three between mother and daughter, two between lovers. By far the best known of them is the fourth, "Vergebliches Ständchen," which may be named as a pattern for the set.

Several among Op. 85, *Six Songs*, especially Nos. 4 and 5, "Ade" and "Frühlings-

lied," are instances of Brahms's love of combined rhythms (so much met with in his instrumental music), finding opportunity in song accompaniments. In all these later sets the songs are for the most part short, as though his continual work had taught the composer how to express himself completely in few bars.

Thus Op. 86, *Six Songs*, are all short, but among them is the lovely "Feldeinsamkeit" (No. 2), and the last is the eloquent "Todessehnen." Whenever Brahms approaches the subject of Death there is something personal in his utterance which love songs and other miscellaneous poems could not call forth; and this one to some extent anticipates the feeling of his last songs (to be spoken of presently) with its heavy-hearted beginning and the transition to the major key, which breaks in like an illuminating ray, at the words, "Hör es Vater in der Höhe."

Op. 91, *Two Songs*, for alto voice, with accompaniments for viola and piano, are like the songs of Op. 17 (see chap. vii.) with accompaniment for horns and harp, examples of Brahms's delicate sense of tone colour. In the first, "Gestillte Sehnsucht," his appreciation of descriptive words and his

power to heighten their effect are shown. The delicious interweaving of the parts for viola and piano makes exactly the right atmosphere for Rückert's poem, with its description of evening stillness and longings of the heart.

The second, "Geistliches Wiegenlied," is a little masterpiece. It is a cradle-song of the Virgin, and into the viola accompaniment the tune of an old carol, "Josef, lieber Josef mein," is worked. The whole song is of the utmost simplicity. In a middle section in the minor key the pain and sorrow that await the Child are thought of, then a return is made to the serene music of the first part.

In Opp. 94 to 97 the compact nature of the songs is even more remarkable.

Op. 94, *Five Songs*, begins with "Mit vierzig Jahren" and includes "Steig' auf, geliebter Schatten" and "Mein Herz ist schwer," fine songs of serious purpose. In the last, as in the "Sapphische Ode," which comes next, Brahms's love of syncopations in the accompaniment is well exemplified. No. 5, "Kein Haus," is only twenty bars in length.

Op. 95, *Seven Songs*, are in a lighter vein. No. 1, "Das Mädchen," is a transcription

of Op. 93*a*, No. 2, and its characteristics are described in the next chapter. Amongst the others may be named, No. 2, "Bei dir sind meine Gedanken," in which the accompaniment is particularly light and dainty, No. 4, "Der Jäger," and the last, "Schön war, das ich dir weihte."

Op. 96, *Four Songs*.—Three of these are settings of words by Heine, No. 1, "Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht"; No. 3, "Es schauen die Blumen"; and No. 4, "Meerfahrt," and are all as finished specimens of the composer's art as they are of that of the poet. The remaining one, "Wir wandelten," is conspicuous for the little imitations of its initial phrase, which, as in Op. 59, No. 7, are interwoven in the accompaniment.

Op. 97, *Six Songs*, contains "Nachtigall" and "Auf dem Schiffe," in both of which the piano parts are beautiful and spring directly from the requirements of the poem. No. 4, "Dort in den Weiden," has become popular because of its dainty rhythm, in which the ends of the phrases are lengthened from 2–4 to 3–4 time, and also for the whimsical way in which an accent is thrown on to the weak parts of the bar by the left hand of the pianist.

In Op. 105, *Five Songs*, the most powerful is No. 4, "Auf dem Kirchhofe." Its short poem has an element of allegory expressed through description which was a special opportunity to Brahms. He seized upon these features, and wrote music which heightens the vivid impression of the dusk of a dismal and rainy day, and makes prominent the contrast of the gravestones, which record what has been (*gewesen*), with the message of the restoring rain (*genesen*).

Op. 106, *Five Songs*, begins with the dainty "Ständchen," which has rightly become very popular with singers. It contains others which should share in its popularity, No. 2, "Auf dem See"; No. 3, "Es hing der Reif"; No. 4, "Meine Lieder"; and No. 5, "Ein Wanderer." Nos. 3 and 5 should specially be noticed as gracefully finished songs.

Op. 107, *Five Songs*, is the last set of these slender but perfect little compositions, and fully equal in beauty all that have gone before; especially may be mentioned "Das Mädchen spricht," "Maienkätzchen," and the last "Mädchenlied."

When a young man, Brahms arranged a number of nursery rhymes for Schumann's children, among them being the often sung

"Sandmännchen," and late in life he similarly treated a great number of German *Volkslieder* which were published, like the early work, without opus numbers. Of these there are seven books; six are for solo voice with piano accompaniment, and the last has chorus parts added. They are set with simple and yet characteristic accompaniments, and in spite of the fact that they are not, strictly speaking, original composition, they are genuine specimens of Brahms's art, and show how closely his own composition was linked with the traditional melody of his native land.

One more work remains to be named, *Vier Ernste Gesänge*, Op. 121, Brahms's last opus. This unique work is, like the *Deutsches Requiem*, a wonderful expression of Brahms's own philosophy of life and death, and it gains additional significance from being his last utterance. The words of the first three songs were chosen by him from the book of Ecclesiastes. The first is a sombre statement of the fact of death for all, and contains, to phrases of great power and simplicity, the words—

"Wer weiss, ob der Geist des Menschen aufwärts fahre,
Und der, odem des Viehes unterwärts unter die Erde,"

and ends pessimistically with the conclusion that all is uncertain. The second looks upon the oppressions and sorrows of the world, and concludes that death is better than life. The third begins with the cry, "O Tod, wie bitter bist du," but ends in the major key with the opposite thought, "O Tod, wie wohl thust du." Upon this sad conclusion, that death at least is peace and life is evil, bursts the fourth song; the clouds are scattered by the message of love as proclaimed in the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, and the whole is summed up by the thought that "Now we see in a glass darkly, but then face to face," that faith, hope, and charity remain, and that the greatest is charity. Of the music little can here be said beyond this, that Brahms had so made the words his own and so clothed them with his own form of expression, that we hear him speaking rather than the Preacher or St. Paul. Only a great singer dare attempt these songs, but such an one has in them one of the loftiest opportunities which music contains.

CHAPTER VII

SMALLER CHORAL WORKS AND FOUR-PART SONGS

BRAHMS is conspicuous among modern composers for his attitude towards the part-song. In the list of his compositions, short works for chorus, with or without accompaniment, or for four solo voices with piano accompaniment, take a very large place. The unaccompanied works of this kind generally consist of a simple melody furnished with vocal harmony. Where the melodies are not actually those of German folk-song they show its influence strongly. The accompanied works, especially those for four solo voices, are governed by exactly the same principles as his songs for a single voice, with, of course, the additional richness and variety gained by the vocal polyphony.

A number of motets upon religious subjects form another type of his short choral works. Here the example of Bach

is followed, sometimes up to the point of direct imitation of his methods. Brahms produced some noble specimens in this style, but there is in his work a disadvantage which marks it apart from the work of Bach. The latter constantly brought his works to the practical test of performance in church; although in some instances it is difficult to believe that they stood the test quite satisfactorily, yet on the whole his choral works are those of a composer who is in the closest touch with his special medium of expression. With Brahms, however, the case is different. Sometimes they appear as experiments in choral technique, and even their beauties, which are many, and the high seriousness of their careful workmanship, place them amongst productions of the thinker rather than of the artist.

For the sake of convenience these very different kinds of composition may be taken together and discussed here in order of their opus numbers.

Op. 12, *Ave Maria* (female choir, orchestra and organ), the first to be noticed, does not fall directly under any one of the classes mentioned. It is an expressive little work in which the vocal writing is

important and the small orchestra (strings, wood, and horns) has only to accompany. It begins with the first words of the hymn sung to long phrases of gentle rise and fall, but at the *Gratia plena* the phrases become more emphatic and there is effective imitation between the voices.

Op. 13, *Begräbnissgesang—Funeral Hymn* (chorus and wind instruments), is of stronger substance than the preceding work. Its words are those of the hymn—

"Nun lasst uns den Leib begraben."

Though there is no thematic likeness, it has something of that solemn tread more fully exemplified in the great funeral march of the *Deutsches Requiem*. It begins softly with a bass lead to the first line of the hymn, the other voices entering in succession with more or less of imitation. The whole work is sombre, an effect increased by the accompaniment for the wind only of the orchestra without flutes and trumpets but with trombones. A light breaks through at the words, "Die Seel', die lebt ohn' alle Klag," with an outburst to the major key, which leads to an impressive climax.

Op. 17, *Gesänge für Frauenchor* (three female voices, two horns, and harp). These

number four, and include a German translation of Shakespere's song from *Twelfth Night*, "Come away, come away, Death." In them Brahms depends more directly upon effects of tone colour than was usual with him. The delicate accompaniments for horns and harp produce with the voices delicious sounds, which would make the songs delightful to hear even were they less interesting in themselves. It is surprising that they are not more often included in programmes of chamber music, where variety is so much needed. In the first, especially, "Es tönt ein voller Harfenklang," the sustained melody of the horns contrasts beautifully with the *arpeggii* of the harp. It is, however, short; more variety of actual musical matter is found in the fourth, "Gesang aus Fingal" (Ossian).

Op. 22, *Marienlieder* (mixed choir, unaccompanied). These are seven part-songs in which legends of the Virgin are told to music of the utmost simplicity. The poems are old, and the music to a large extent adopts the old manner in which Brahms could always be successful, because of his power of using successions of common chords effectively. It is worth noting that he did not adopt a strictly archaic style, but that

he allowed himself the free use of the seventh and its inversions where he wished. The general feeling, however, is that of the olden time, when art and religion were two children walking hand in hand.

Op. 27, *Psalm XIII.* (female chorus and organ), is not a powerful setting of this intensely human Psalm. A short introduction of smooth writing such as is often supposed to belong to the organ, though it is really ineffective, is succeeded by emphatic exclamations of the first word "Herr," which makes a fine opening, but the music does not gather in intensity as it advances, and the first soprano part is made trying by the continued use of high notes, G and A.

Op. 29, *Two Motets* (five-voiced mixed choir). It is here that we first meet works clearly founded upon Bach's style. The first, "Es ist das Heil uns kommen her," consists of two movements, a chorale given out in crotchets by soprano accompanied by three continually moving parts in quavers below it, and a fugue in which the first bass sings the phrases of the chorale in longer notes in the manner of a *canto fermo*.

The second motet is taken from Psalm li. —"Schaffe in mir Gott, ein rein' Herz." It assumes the proportions of a short

church cantata, beginning with a movement of massive harmony to the first words, followed by a strict and intricate fugue, in which a chromatic counter-subject gives its character to the whole. Brahms's student-like attitude is here illustrated by the fact that he adopts a tonal answer to the subject, spoiling the theme in so doing. A movement in which canonic imitation is prominent leads to a final fugue, working to an impressive climax.

Op. 30, *Geistliches Lied* (four-part chorus and organ), is, like the 13th Psalm, of no great importance. It of course shows Brahms's musicianship in treating vocal parts *a capella*, but it is not particularly original.

Op. 31, *Three Quartets* (four solo voices with pianoforte), are in a very different vein. The piano part is at least equally important with the voices, as in so many of the solo songs. In the first, "Wechsellied zum Tanze" (Goethe), the dialogue between "Die Gleichgültigen" and "Die Zärtlichen" is maintained by alto and bass against soprano and tenor, while the piano has a separate rhythm for each, combined, when the four voices join, at the end. In the second, "Neckereien," the voices are again in pairs, this time the more usual contrast

of women's voices with men's. It is charming and lively, and contrasts with the more obvious sentiment of the third, "Der Gang zum Liebchen," which is, however, a beautiful little melody.

Op. 37, *Drei geistliche Chöre* (female voices) are further examples of Brahms's contrapuntal skill and close study of vocal effect, while using the means of imitation and canon of the old time. They are "O bone Jesu," "Adoramus," and "Regina Cœli"; of the three, the last is most remarkable. In it a soprano solo is answered by an alto solo in canon by contrary motion, and their course is punctuated by exclamations of "Alleluya" from the chorus.

Op. 41, *Five Songs* (four male voices), are very short, very simple, and well worth more frequent performance than they get in England. The cause of their neglect is doubtless that male voice choirs in England are chiefly found among people to whom the pronunciation of the German would be a difficulty. These songs catch the spirit of the German *Volkslied*, while the writing shows even in so small a space the freedom of Brahms's individuality. Especially the last one exemplifies this; the tune begun

by the upper parts is accompanied by the lower parts with reiterations of "Gebt Acht," the title of the song, upon tonic and dominant alternately.

Op. 42, *Three Songs* (six voices, mixed choir), are fine pieces of workmanship. "Abendständchen" is short but very expressive. More striking is "Vineta," in which beautiful vocal colour is gained by the disposition of the voices. Its form is of the simple part-song kind. In the third, "Darthula's Grabesgesang," Brahms uses very forcibly a device to gain expression, which also appeared in the first with less striking results, namely, that of lengthening the rhythms from duple to triple time on important words. This irregularity, with greater independence in the part writing, makes the third the most difficult of the three songs.

Op. 44, *Zwölf Lieder und Romanzen* (female choir with pianoforte accompaniment *ad libitum*). These are one and all lovely melodies, harmonised with a delicate sense of vocal colour. The dainty grace of the Barcarole (No. 3), or the more intense and yet restrained expression of No. 6—"Die Nonne" (Uhland)—could not be surpassed within the limits of so small a song.

Op. 52, *Liebeslieder Walzer* (pianoforte, four hands, and vocal quartet *ad libitum*). We are so used to regarding vocal parts with words to them as necessarily more important than purely musical parts, that it is at first difficult to realise that here Brahms set out to write a set of waltzes for piano duet, and tried the experiment of giving them additional colour by scoring them for solo voices with the piano. They are primarily instrumental music, and should perhaps have been considered with the other waltzes, Op. 39, under the heading of piano music. The voice parts, however, are not unimportant; we lose besides colour some beautiful melodies if they are taken away. Delightful as are each of these eighteen waltzes, it may be doubted whether the experiment is wholly successful. The continued 3–4 time inevitably becomes stiff and monotonous in spite of all the variety of rhythm with which Brahms could clothe it, and the ear is apt to be attracted first to the vocal accompaniment, which is necessarily more limited in rhythm than the piano parts.

Op. 62, *Seven Songs* (mixed choir, unaccompanied), are charming little part-songs of a simple kind. The first four and the

last are for four voices, while No. 5, "All' meine Herzgedanken," is for six, and No. 6, "Es geht ein Wehen," for five. The last is "Vergangen ist mir Glück und Heil," which has already appeared as a solo song in Op. 48.

Op. 64, *Three Quartets* (four solo voices and pianoforte), are more elaborately developed than the earlier works of the kind. No. 1, "An die Heimath," is inspired by beautiful feeling, but its *ensemble* is difficult. No. 2, "Der Abend," is simpler, and though its melody is distinguishable as Brahms's, it has the feeling of the ordinary part-song and its performance can be more easily achieved. No. 3, "Fragen," in which the questions are put to the tenor voice by the other three, is very fresh and delightful, but no quartet of singers should try it unless the tenor voice possesses high notes, A and A♭, which he can take and leave easily and well.

Op. 65, *Neue Liebeslieder Walzer* (four solo voices and pianoforte, four hands). The second set has not quite the same character as the first. The voices are here avowedly the leaders, though the piano part is still important. While all are in triple time, the waltz rhythm is less insistent. Many numbers are solos, and in these the piano part must to some extent take the position

of accompaniment. If this set is not in reality quite so new as the older ones, there are at least some lovely numbers, amongst which may be named the quartet No. 8, and the duet for soprano and alto, No. 13, "Nein, Geliebter." In both sets the words are from Daumer's "Polydora."

Op. 74, *Two Motets* (mixed choir, *a capella*). These bring us back to Brahms's most severe style of church composition. The first, "Warum ist das Licht gegeben dem Mühseligen?" is the most powerful. It consists of four movements, in the first three of which spontaneous feeling is expressed through the intricate polyphonic writing, while in the last a chorale sums up the whole exactly in the style of Bach, to the words—

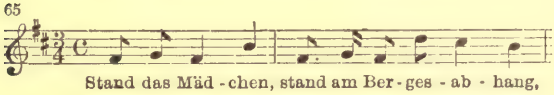
"Mit Fried' und Freud' ich fahr' dahin."

In the second, "O Heiland, reiss' die Himmel auf," a chorale is treated through five verses with every kind of contrapuntal device by which the words can be expressed.

Op. 92, *Four Quartets* (four solo voices and pianoforte). In these quartets the piano is again prominent. The vocal writing is for the most part smoother in outline than in Op. 64. The most important is the

last, a splendid and impassioned setting of Goethe's "Warum?"

Op. 93 (*a*), *Lieder und Romanzen*, contains six numbers, all of the simple part-song type, evolved from the *Volkslied*. Among them No. 2, "Das Mädchen," should be noticed as a happy instance of an irregular rhythm, being called forth by the words; each line naturally falls into a bar of triple followed by a bar of quadruple time.



Op. 93 (*b*), *Tafellied* (six voices and pianoforte), is a piece of light-hearted humour in which the men's and women's voices are treated in dialogue.

Op. 103, *Zigeunerlieder* (four voices and pianoforte). The energetic rhythms are as fresh and jolly as those of the better known Hungarian dances, and these delightful songs illustrate the same side of Brahms's character. They ought to be heard much more frequently than they are; it would be better to sing them in English than not to sing them at all.

Op. 104, *Five Songs* (mixed choir). The first three of these are for six voices, the fourth for five, and the last for four, and

it is remarkable how, with so complex a means, Brahms manages to maintain so simple an outline of melody. The words are light, and at first sight a six-part choir singing contrapuntal music to them seems incongruous and might easily become absurd, but sometimes by dividing the voices, sometimes by restraining the independent movement, Brahms manages to keep the musical effect well in touch with the words.

Op. 109, *Fest- und Gedenksprüche* (eight-part chorus, unaccompanied) are three motets written when Brahms received the honorary citizenship of Hamburg. They are composed to texts taken from the Bible—"Our fathers trusted in Thee," "When a strong man fully armed keepeth his palace," and "For what nation is so great, that hath God so nigh," are the initial texts which suggest their subjects. Two choirs sing antiphonally, and in these the composer's immense contrapuntal powers are exerted to the highest ends, and the works contain imposing choral effects. *À propos* of them Sittard said: "Brahms is the only composer of the present day who can sufficiently control his own individuality to be capable of expressing his texts in a musical language universally applicable and intelligible."

Whether Brahms is indeed the only modern composer who can do so may be disputed, but this power cannot be denied, and it is conspicuous in an age which looks upon expression of individuality as the highest art. The self-control and discipline of Brahms's life and work gain a magnificent reward in the "Fest- und Gedenksprüche."

Op. 110, *Three Motets* (four and eight-part choir). In writing these, his last contribution to church music, Brahms was more completely natural than in the earlier motets. Though here his masterly treatment of the vocal parts is the outcome of the study of Bach's methods, he does not copy the conventions of his form. The first and last, "Ich aber bin elend" and "Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen sein," are elaborate specimens of modern eight-part counterpoint, while at the same time they are clearly actuated by a genuine artistic impulse. No. 2, "Ach, arme Welt," stands between them, a simple piece in four parts, but no less expressive. The sorrowful character of the words of all three coming thus at the end of the composer's life is remarkable, and must be noticed with the "Vier Ernste Gesänge" and the clarinet quintet.

Op. 112, *Six quartets* (four solo voices and pianoforte) contain two, "Sehnsucht" and "Nächtens," developed in the same manner as the earlier vocal quartets, "Nächtens" being written in the comparatively unfamiliar quintuple time. The remaining four are "Zigeunerlieder" of the same kind as Op. 103.

Op. 113. *Thirteen Canons* (female voices, three, four, and six parts). Some of these are what English people generally call "Catches." It is possible that the more learned title of "Canon" has caused people to flee from them, but they are for the most part quite guiltless of academic seriousness, and some are charming arrangements of nursery rhymes and folk-songs, such as "Schlaf' kindlein schlaf'."

More elaborate is No. 6, in which two contraltos sing the canon in contrary motion to the two sopranos, and in Nos. 8 and 9 two parts sing the canon at the fifth below instead of in unison, while No. 13, the most elaborate of all, has four sopranos singing the canon in unison, and what in old time was called a "pes" for two alto voices, themselves in canon. The whole humorously illustrates the words—

"Einförmig ist der Liebe Gram."

CHAPTER VIII

LARGER CHORAL WORKS WITH ORCHESTRA

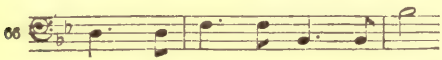
HAVING traced Brahms's music from the piano to the full orchestra, and from the song for a single voice to such triumphs of vocal polyphony as the last motets and the "Fest- und Gedenksprüche," we have to consider lastly the works in which chorus and orchestra are combined. In these it is noticeable that the choral element is always most important, although they contain many beautiful passages of orchestral music. First among them we come to the greatest and, in England, by far the best known of these works—*Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Op. 45.

The universal appeal which its subject makes necessarily wins it attentive listeners. Its breadth and nobility is all-embracing; its words, chosen from the Bible, are not arranged to accord with a theological system, but are a living commentary on the great subjects of life and death, of joy and sorrow, which concern all human beings most nearly.

It is said that the death of his mother turned Brahms's thoughts in this direction; but from the number of the choral works which treat of the shortness of human life and question of the future, it would seem that his mind was constantly turned to the subject, though he never expressed himself so clearly or so conclusively as in the *Requiem.*

It has seven movements; in the first, on the beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," the effect of placid vocal phrases, peculiarly translucent in harmony, contrasting with a sombre orchestral background without violins, is very impressive. This movement demands of a choir great vocal purity and certainty of intonation, the latter especially in the second section, "They that sow in tears." For dignity, combined with an infinite tenderness which never stoops to sentimentality, this beginning is unsurpassed in the whole range of music. The solemn funeral march follows. It is in B♭ minor, and is peculiar in being written in 3–4 time; in spite of this, however, the tramp of many feet, the march of all humanity to its end, is present throughout its course. In both the first movement

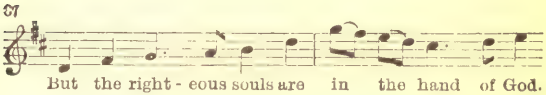
and this one, Brahms has used the device of making the orchestra first play the principal theme, and thus of superimposing voice parts above music which has already created its impression without aid from words. "Behold, all flesh is as the grass," comes as the inevitable interpretation of the march. The second section, "Now therefore be patient," is infinitely refreshing, and after a return of the march the outburst of the fugue, "The redeemed of the Lord," is a magnificent conclusion. Strictly speaking, it should not perhaps be spoken of as fugue, for though its principal theme given out in the bass receives a tonal answer in the soprano part, there is no further exposition, the other voices entering with the soprano. The episodes are of almost equal importance with the subject, which never appears in its completeness again, though much use of this, its first figure, is made.



It is treated in *stretto* by the voices, and in the wonderful coda over a double pedal the wind instruments recall it while the voices meditate upon "joy everlasting."

After this piece of glorious optimism, the

return to such sombre thoughts and sombre music as that of "Lord, let me know mine end," is sometimes felt to be ill-judged, but in this movement, in which a bass solo leads the chorus, Brahms touches a more personal aspect of his subject. It portrays the cry of the soul who has reached no sublime height of confidence, but who sees before him the common fate of death. The struggle for some assurance is powerfully expressed in the setting for solo and chorus of the words, "Now, Lord, what do I long for?" which gives place to a fugue upon a soaring subject to these words—



It is peculiar in being written over a tonic pedal maintained throughout, which gives it a certain heavy monotony as though in spite of this aspiring theme Brahms did not wish his hearers to be again carried off the earth. The beautiful little chorus in E♭, "How lovely is Thy dwelling-place," is too well known and too simple to need any description. Here there is no such restraint, and the hearers are free to enter

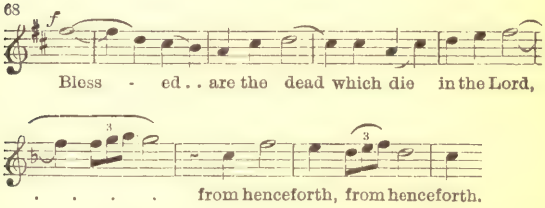
the highest region of thought and contemplation.

The soprano solo, with chorus, "Ye now are sorrowful," was added after the whole of the rest of the *Requiem* had been performed. It is full of comfort, but few solos test the artistic powers of a singer more severely. Its long phrases upon few syllables contain in themselves the needful expression, and any attempt to force a more passionate utterance sinks it to a lower level.

Next comes the most remarkable movement or series of movements. The words "Here on earth have we no continuing city" are set to a steadily moving measure in common time; the use of successions of triads is here most striking. The bass solo breaks in with words of prophecy, which culminate with "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the trumpet." The magnificent outbursts of chorus, "For the trumpet shall sound" and "For death shall be swallowed in victory," are unique as instances of powerful results produced by simple means. Their strength lies in the harmonic progression, which is marvellously planned and which reaches a climax in a great, perfect cadence leading to the trium-

phant fugue, "Worthy art Thou to be praised!"

This is the conclusion of the matter, and what follows is musically of the nature of a coda, while its subject, the beatitude of the Apocalypse, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," links it with the first movement, as conclusion follows premiss. Its principal theme is an example of Brahms's vigorous attitude towards the subject; it is no placid and characterless state which is contemplated; this cry of the angel from Heaven is of triumphant activity.



As the work approaches its ending, the theme of the first movement appears to these words, and results in a coda which is almost identical with that of the first movement, and brings the whole to a point of complete repose.

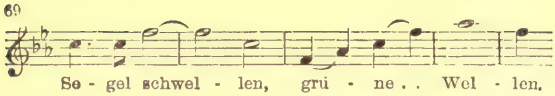
The *Requiem* was published in 1868, and in the following year appeared *Rinaldo*,

Op. 50, a setting of Goethe's libretto for tenor solo, male chorus, and orchestra. It is the only instance of anything approaching dramatic composition by Brahms, and is evidence, if any were needed, that he considered the possibility of writing an opera. That he attempted more than one libretto is well known, but he could not make his music subservient to the haste of dramatic action, and this unacted and unactable drama was all that resulted. Its perusal makes one profoundly glad that Brahms went no further; even here the attempt to infuse movement becomes restless and produces a weakness akin to that of Mendelssohn under like circumstances. After a short prelude the knights, friends of Rinaldo, sing in chorus—

"Zu dem Strande, zu der Barke."

Rinaldo (tenor solo), enchanted by the spells of Armide, begs in an impassioned recitative to be allowed to remain on her island. His song, "Stelle her der gold'nen Tage," is composed of fluent melody which well reflects the mellifluous character of Goethe's words. The chorus interrupts the flow of his delusions with persuasive words, but without result. A more vigorous song to

the same effect follows, introduced by an excited upward *arpeggio* for strings, taken up and crowned by the voice to the words, "Aber aller verkündet: nur sie ist gemeinet." A fine point is reached where the chorus interrupts with the determination to break the spell. This is done by showing to the victim a shield of diamonds in which the truth is mirrored to him. The device seems as silly as anything in Wagner, against whose childish magic Brahms was wont to bring forcible objections. He may have realised this, for he passes the incident over quickly, and continues to occupy himself with the vacillating state of Rinaldo and the attempts of the knights to strengthen his courage. At last in a skilfully planned number, in which plain diatonic phrases for chorus in the major key of C alternate with less healthy minor ones for the solo, the knights prevail and persuade Rinaldo to go with them. A *finale*, a choral sea song, is the finest part of the work, since here Brahms is freed from dramatic trappings and can develop his material at will. He chooses as his chief subject a phrase entirely made from an *arpeggio*, and throughout the music vividly reflects the freshness of the open sea.



The next work was also for male chorus, but this time with contralto solo, a very beautiful and rich combination. It is a fragment from Goethe's "Harzreise," and was called by Brahms a *Rhapsodie*, Op. 53. Its words are sufficiently few to print in full, and they form the simplest commentary on the work. A prelude of seventeen bars shows how powerful could be Brahms's use of dissonance when his subject demanded it. Its material is then used as accompaniment to the declamation of the following by the solo voice—

"Aber abseits wer ist's?
In's Gebüsch verliert sich sein Pfad,
Hinter ihm schlagen die Sträuche zusammen,
Das gras steht wieder auf,
Die Oede verschlingt ihn."

In a more contemplative and melodic mood the solo voice sings, still in C minor—

"Ach wer heilet die Schmerzen dess,
Dem Balsam zu Gift ward?
Der sich Menschenhass
Aus der Fülle der Liebe trank?
Erst verachtet, nun ein Verächter,
Zehrt er heimlich auf seinen eig'nen Werth
In ung' nügender Selbst-sucht."

Lastly comes an inspired strain in C major, a most welcome melody, in which the chorus joins with the solo to these words of comfort—

> "Ist auf deinem Psalter
> Vater der Liebe, ein Ton
> Seinem Ohre vernehmlich
> So erquicke sein Herz."

And another melody, which contrasts with it, introduces striking modulations to these words—

> "Oeffne den umwölkten Blick
> Ueber die tausend Quellen
> Neben dem Durstenden in der Wüste."

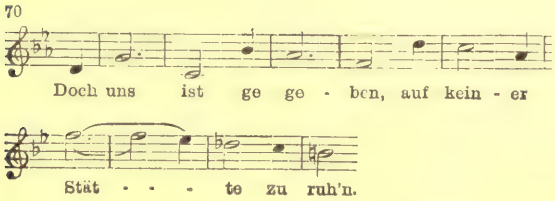
In this beautiful work Brahms allows himself a poignancy of expression which gives it a distinct place of its own. The elevation of the subject excluded such expression from the *Requiem*, and there was not enough of reality in *Rinaldo* to demand it. It is here because of the human sympathy which the poem called forth.

Schicksalslied, Op. 54, a short poem by Hölderlin, follows immediately on the *Rhapsodie*. It is often spoken of as Brahms's most complete choral work from a purely artistic standpoint, and it is difficult to imagine anything within these limits more

perfectly executed. An orchestral prelude in a serene and ethereal mood, in which the solemn rhythm of the drum keeps touch with earth, introduces the words—

> "Ihr wandelt droben im Licht
> Auf weichem Boden, selige Genien!"

sung first by the altos of the chorus, then taken up by full chorus. In the section in which the state of the blessed ones is revealed, Brahms achieves the most perfect disposition of vocal parts, and here, as so often elsewhere, reaches to the sublime by his use of common chords. When this vision of loveliness is completed, whirling passages upon the strings destroy it and introduce the second part of the poem, which describes the fate-driven condition of humanity.



This piles up to pinnacles of orchestral and

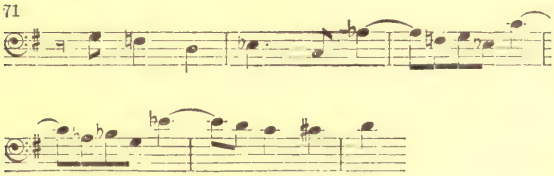
choral tone, and, when a climax has been reached, to the words—

> "Wie Wasser von Klippe
> Zu Klippe, geworfen,
> Jahrlang in's Ungewisse hinab."

the music sinks to a sad *pianissimo* with repetitions of the last phrase. Here Hölderlin ends, but not so Brahms. The vision of beauty reappears in more sublime form for the sorrow which has been passed, and this in an orchestral epilogue repeating the material of the first part of the work in the pure-sounding key of C major.

This period, so fruitful in choral works, closed with the magnificent *Triumphlied*, Op. 55, for eight-part chorus with baritone solo and orchestra. Merely as an example of contrapuntal writing for two choruses, it is interesting to musicians; but as a piece of music it is full of an exuberance combined with a dignity which is only found elsewhere in the masterpieces of Bach and Handel. A short orchestral introduction, in which semiquaver passages bear a distinct likeness to a mannerism of Bach's time, leads to a first chorus of "Hallelujah" (D major). The words are taken from the nineteenth chapter of the book of

Revelation, and this chorus includes the ascriptions of praise therein. In it every device is used, from simple alternations of the two choirs to the most intricate use of invertible counterpoint. It is followed by another chorus of praise in more stately measure (G major, 3–4 time), approached by a passage upon a remarkable bass.



This chorus gives place to a fanfare of brass, leading to a short repetition of the "Hallelujah," after which an impressive series of fugal entries takes place on the words—

"For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Another chorus in G major (12–8 and 4–4 time), "Let us be glad and rejoice," is of very different character, and is welcome for its peaceful reflective nature and its *pianissimo* ending.

After it comes the dramatic moment in the work, in which the baritone solo voice announces, "I saw Heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and He that sat upon

him was called Faithful and True." The chorus, at first hushed to *pianissimo*, echoes the words, but rises to loud declamation with repetitions at "Faithful and True." There is a short chorus on the words, "He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God," rising to a climax upon the last words. Then the solo voice tells of the "Name written," and the first basses lead the way to the final chorus with the words—

"King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

Here as before, elaborate polyphony is used, and a triumphant ending is reached with repetitions of "Hallelujah."

It is surprising that this work should be so rarely performed by large English choral societies, considering how nearly it approaches to the ideal of Handel's oratorios, so long beloved by us. Its much greater complexity has hindered it somewhat; it has received occasional hearing at a northern festival, where the robust quality of tone which belongs to these choirs is able to do it justice. Such a massive work might receive a fine performance in the Albert Hall, and it is greatly to be wished that the authorities who reign there had sufficient enterprise to undertake it.

Two other short works, composed some years later, have here to be named, though they are not of equal importance with those already described. Both are of the fatalistic kind which so strongly attracted Brahms. The first, *Nänie*, Op. 82, is a setting of a short poem by Schiller, meditating upon the inevitable nature of death, and concluding—

> "Auch ein Klaglied zu sein im Mund der Geliebten, ist herrlich
> Denn das Gemeine geht Klanglos zum Orkus hinab."

The music is impressive by the general beauty of the vocal writing rather than by any strong event. Its first part, in smooth 6–4 time (D major), meditates upon the death alike of heroes and of common men. A middle section in the firmer quadruple time contrasts with this and speaks of the lament of the gods for the great ones, while a return is made to the first style for the coda on the words quoted. Here, again, as in the *Schicksalslied*, Brahms gives evidence that he is more optimistic than his poet, by dwelling on the word "herrlich," and ending thoughtfully with it.

The last work we have to consider is a setting of Goethe's *Gesang der Parzen*, Op. 89, for six-part chorus and orchestra.

Here the ruthless power of the gods is the theme; the music begins with a powerful orchestral outburst, which hushes to a *pianissimo* before the entrance of the three men's voices to the words, "Es furchte die Götter das Menschengeschlecht." The first stanzas are chanted to simple music of strong rhythm by the men's and women's voices alternately; they join, and the polyphony gradually becomes more complex as the glories of the Olympian feasts are described, and the dread penalties which await those who incur displeasure. A passage of tender and very characteristic melody in the major key, harmonised richly in six parts, is set to the words—

> "Es wenden die Herrscher ihr segnendes Auge
> Von ganzen Geschlechtern."

The ending is tragic; the voices whisper—

> "Denkt Kinder und Enkel
> Und schüttelt das Haupt,"

to wailing orchestral phrases which die away in a minor chord.

The close of our study of Brahms's works is the most fitting place to mention the one composition published after his death, since it does not fall under any of the classes

which have occupied the foregoing chapters. It is a set of eleven "Choralvorspiele" for the organ. These, like the motets, are founded upon Bach's practice and follow his methods closely, though Brahms had by no means the mastery of organ technique which made Bach's works of the kind transcend all others. Each one is no mere faithful copy, but a genuine expression of something native to the composer; it is not surprising if the most characteristic among them are those which depart from conventional organ writing and are akin to Brahms's piano works. No. 4, "Herzlich thut mich erfreuen," for instance, does this, as well as several others written upon two staves to be played without pedals. These are in reality piano music, and indeed by some slight rearrangement the whole set may be played upon that instrument more effectively than upon the organ. When this is done the increase in sympathetic tone and the greater power of giving expression to individual melodies more than compensates the change.

Of Brahms's earlier attempts at composition for the organ as a solo instrument, only two are published, a fine fugue in A♭ minor and a "Choralvorspiel" and fugue on

the tune, "O Traurigkeit, O Herzeleid." Both are pure specimens of Brahms's lofty musicianship, and to hear them tempts one to the conclusion that, had circumstances been different, Brahms might have been that apostle of the organ who is so much needed, and for lack of whom that instrument has fallen into disrepute and become the medium for every form of inartistic experiment.

In hearing the "Choralvorspiele" (called by Messrs. Simrock, the publishers, Op. 122), we are not inclined to dwell upon questions of organ technique; we only see that Brahms in his last days dwelt lovingly upon old tunes, some of which, like "Herzlich thut mich Verlangen," of which he wrote two arrangements (Nos. 9 and 10), had been the mainspring of German feeling since the time of Luther, and that his meditations led him to his own characteristic expression, which took form in these pieces. They contain his favourite devices of subtly interwoven rhythms, combined melodies, and poignant harmonies which never become morbid. It is not surprising that at such a time the tune, "O Welt, ich muss dich lassen," should be twice set. It may be a coincidence, but it is an interesting one, that the rhythmic figure of quavers in pairs

which accompanies the first of these (No. 3) is the same as that which accompanies the last movement of the *Requiem* to the words "Blessed are the dead." The last of the eleven is a very simple arrangement of this tune. Each line has the effect of a double echo; Brahms lingers over it as though he could scarce bear to leave it, but finally allows it to sink to rest in a point of complete repose.

CHAPTER IX

THE POSITION OF BRAHMS

THERE have been, and still are, many prophets who cry aloud with conflicting voices of the ultimate position of Brahms in the history of music. If our study of the long list of his compositions has been to any purpose, it has shown us a number of great works of art, separated from the older school of which Beethoven was the culmination, as the thoughts and feelings of the nineteenth century are separated from those of the eighteenth; standing, by reason of their greater force and reality, far above the works of the early romanticists, of whom Schumann was chief, aloof from the dramatic ideals of Wagner, the descriptive and sensational methods of Berlioz and Liszt. Brahms appears isolated and utterly alone; that which linked him with the past, his immutable devotion to abstract musical form, cut him off from his contemporaries, while so active and receptive a mind as his, work-

ing in the latter half of the nineteenth century, could not remain behind, but necessarily shared in the spirit of freedom and progress for which others clamoured with more insistent voices.

It is now only ten years since Brahms's death, and twenty-five since that of Wagner, yet music seems to have made immense strides, and to have passed into channels not directly prophesied by either. Music drama has not advanced since *Tristan*, Italian opera has been rejuvenated, and German and French opera have progressed in characteristic channels, which, while they owe much to Wagner, do not perpetuate all his methods. Still less have the symphonies of Brahms found a successor. Instead, the principles of programme music, as formulated by Berlioz and Liszt, have been developed and pushed to their logical conclusion, possibly their *reductio ad absurdum*, in the works of Richard Strauss, and others. As we sit in the concert room, our ears flooded with these orchestral outpourings, or read in contemporary criticism that principles of tonality are now completely outworn, that we are emancipated into the realm of unrestrained chromaticism, of music in which emotional expression is

at last unfettered by formal restraints and prohibitions, Brahms may well seem the last of a great tribe, born after his time, mighty, yet influencing little the art of the future. Art moves so quickly, that Wagner, the revolutionary of the seventies, is now the idol of respectable, orthodox, and church-going English people; soon even Richard Strauss must vacate the rostrum and allow more advanced demagogues to preach this gospel of freedom.

But when the gospel is completely preached and heard by all, what then? At the rate of progress now in vogue that must certainly be achieved before Brahms has lain in his grave a quarter of a century. Then, when we know that we can do everything in music, when we can use every combination of sound, when the composer has within his grasp effects of orchestral colour of which Brahms never dreamed, shall he not look at the scores of the first symphony, the piano quintet, the double concerto, and find there something majestic, a fundamental dignity, a nobility of conception which he lacks? When all artistic means are at the composer's disposal, comes the time for ordering, for selection amongst them. It is then that Brahms's influence

will assert itself and his example become a guiding light. History repeats itself; our art has passed through such periods before, and probably must do so again. The admirers of Monteverde might well look back at Palestrina's music and say, "Yes, noble, but of the past"; yet Bach came and linked Palestrina's polyphony with his own age. Bach dying, where were his gorgeous achievements perpetuated in the sonatas of his son, Carl Philip, or the symphonies of Haydn? Not till the arrival of Brahms himself did the counterpoint of Bach become an integral factor of the sonata or symphony.

So we must wait, and the quicker art moves the better, if it brings us nearer to the time when the attributes of Brahms's genius become incorporated as the universal heritage of musicians. Of one thing only we must beware; the tendency to think that because the immediate progress of the art seems to be away from the principles upheld by the great ones who have finished their work, that either they or the present tendencies are wrong. It is ever so; history shows that progress is gained, and the work of these great ones eventually fulfils itself. Our outlook is very limited, and we

must be content to believe that one who faithfully sums up the rich inheritance of the past and uses it for the expression of his own individual genius cannot fail to have a most potent influence upon the art of the future. Such an one assuredly is Johannes Brahms.

COMPLETE LIST OF WORKS BY JOHANNES BRAHMS

(A.) Works with Opus Number

Op. 1. Sonata for Pianoforte (C major).
2. Sonata for Pianoforte (F sharp minor).
3. Six songs.
4. Scherzo for Pianoforte (E flat minor).
5. Sonata for Pianoforte (F minor).
6. Six songs.
7. Six songs.
8. Trio for Violin, Violoncello, and Pianoforte (in B major).
9. Variations on a theme by Schumann, for Pianoforte.
10. Four Ballads for Pianoforte.
11. Serenade for Orchestra (D major).
12. "Ave Maria," for Female Chorus and Orchestra.
13. "Begräbnissgesang," for Chorus and Wind Instruments.
14. "Lieder and Romanzen" for single Voice and Pianoforte.
15. Concerto for Pianoforte and Orchestra (D minor).
16. Serenade for small Orchestra (A major).
17. Four Songs for Women's Voices, with Accompaniment for two Horns and Harp.
18. Sestet for two Violins, two Viole, two Violoncelli (B flat major).
19. Five Songs.
20. Three Duets for Soprano and Alto.

Op. 21. No. 1, Variations on an original theme.
No. 2, Variations on a Hungarian theme.
22. Marienlieder for mixed Choir.
23. Variations on a theme by Robert Schumann for Pianoforte, four hands.
24. Variations and Fugue on a theme by Handel, for Pianoforte.
25. Quartet for Pianoforte and Strings (G minor).
26. Quartet for Pianoforte and Strings (A major).
27. Psalm XIII., for Female Voices and Organ.
28. Four Duets for Alto and Baritone with Pianoforte.
29. Two Motets for mixed Choir *a capella.*
30. "Geistliches Lied," for mixed Choir and Organ.
31. Three Quartets, S., A., T., B., and Pianoforte.
32. Nine Songs.
33. Fifteen Romances from Tieck's "Magelone," single Voice and Pianoforte.
34. Quintet for Pianoforte and Strings (F minor).
35. Variations on a theme by Paganini for Pianoforte.
36. Sestet for two Violins, two Viole, two Violoncelli (G major).
37. "Drei geistliche Chöre," for Female Voices.
38. Sonata for Pianoforte and Violoncello (E minor).
39. Waltzes for Pianoforte, four hands.
40. Trio for Pianoforte, Violin, and Horn (E flat).
41. Five Songs for Male Choir.
42. Three Songs for six-voiced Choir.
43. Four Songs.
44. "Lieder und Romanzen," for Female Choir *a capella*, Pianoforte *ad lib.*
45. "Ein Deutsches Requiem," for Soli, Chorus, Orchestra.
46. Four Songs.
47. Five Songs.
48. Seven Songs.
49. Five Songs.
50. "Rinaldo," for Tenor Solo, Male Chorus, and Orchestra.

Op. 51. No. 1. Quartet for Strings (C minor).
No. 2. Quartet for Strings (A minor).
52. "Liebeslieder" for Pianoforte, four hands and Quartet, S., A., T., B., *ad lib.*
53. Rhapsodie for Alto Solo, Male Chorus, and Orchestra.
54. "Schicksalslied," for Chorus and Orchestra.
55. "Triumphlied," for Baritone Solo, Chorus, Orchestra.
56. A. Variations on a theme by Haydn for Orchestra.
B. Variations on a theme by Haydn for two Pianofortes.
57. Eight Songs.
58. Eight Songs.
59. Eight Songs.
60. Quartet for Pianoforte and Strings (C minor).
61. Four Duets for Soprano and Alto, and Pianoforte.
62. Seven Songs for mixed Choir *a capella.*
63. Nine Songs.
64. Three Quartets, S., A., T., B., and Pianoforte.
65. "Neue Liebeslieder" for four Voices and Pianoforte, four Hands.
66. Five Duets for Soprano and Alto, and Pianoforte.
67. Quartet for Strings (B flat major).
68. First Symphony for Orchestra (C minor).
69. Nine Songs.
70. Four Songs.
71. Five Songs.
72. Five Songs.
73. Second Symphony for Orchestra (D major).
74. Two Motets, mixed Choir *a capella.*
75. "Balladen und Romanzen," for two Voices with Pianoforte.
76. "Clavierstücke."
77. Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (D major).
78. Sonata for Pianoforte and Violin (G major).
79. Two Rhapsodies for Pianoforte.
80. Academic Festival Overture for Orchestra.

Op. 81. Tragic Overture for Orchestra.
82. "Nänie," for Chorus and Orchestra.
83. Concerto for Pianoforte and Orchestra (B flat major).
84. "Romanzen und Lieder," for one or two Voices, and Pianoforte.
85. Six Songs.
86. Six Songs.
87. Trio for Pianoforte, Violin, and Violoncello (C major).
88. Quintet, two Violins, two Viole, and Violoncello (F major).
89. "Gesang der Parzen" for six-voiced Choir and Orchestra.
90. Third Symphony for Orchestra (F major).
91. Two Songs for Alto with Viola and Pianoforte.
92. Four Quartets, S., A., T, B, and Pianoforte.
93. A. "Lieder und Romanzen," for four-voiced Choir.
B. "Tafellied," for six-voiced Choir and Pianoforte.
94. Five Songs.
95. Seven Songs.
96. Four Songs.
97. Six Songs.
98. Fourth Symphony for Orchestra (E minor).
99. Sonata for Violoncello and Pianoforte (F major).
100. Sonata for Violin and Pianoforte (A major).
101. Trio for Pianoforte, Violin, and Violoncello (C minor).
102. Concerto for Violin, Violoncello, and Orchestra (A minor).
103. "Zigeunerlieder," for S., A., T., B., and Pianoforte.
104. Five Songs for mixed Choir.
105. Five Songs.
106. Five Songs.
107. Five Songs.
108. Sonata for Violin and Pianoforte (D minor).

Op. 109. "Fest- und Gedenksprüche," for eight-voiced Choir, *a capella.*
110. Three Motets for four- and eight-voiced Choirs, *a capella.*
111. Quintet, two Violins, two Viole, and Violoncelli (G major).
112. Six Quartets for S.,A., T., B., and Pianoforte.
113. Thirteen Canons for Female Voices.
114. Trio for Pianoforte, Clarinet, and Violoncello (A minor).
115. Quintet for Clarinet, and Strings (B minor).
116. "Fantasien" for Pianoforte.
117. Three Intermezzi for Pianoforte.
118. "Clavierstücke."
119. "Clavierstücke."
120. 1. Sonata for Clarinet and Pianoforte (F minor).
2. Sonata for Clarinet and Pianoforte (E flat).
121. "Vier Ernste Gesänge," for Bass Voice and Pianoforte.
122. Eleven "Choralvorspiele" for Organ (posthumous).

(B.) Works without Opus Number

I. Instrumental

Fifty-one Studies for Pianoforte.
Hungarian Dances—four books for Pianoforte, four hands.

Arrangements for Pianoforte.
1. Étude by Chopin.
2. Rondeau by Weber.
3. Presto by Bach.
4. Presto by Bach, second arrangement.
5. Chaconne by Bach, arranged for left hand alone.
6. Gavotte by Gluck.

Fugue in A minor for Organ.
"Choralvorspiel," Fugue.
On "O Traurigkeit, O Herzeleid."

II. VOCAL

German Folk-Songs, seven books for Single Voice and Pianoforte (the last book with Chorus parts *ad lib.*).
German Folk-Songs, two books for Four Voices.
"Mondnacht," for Single Voice and Pianoforte.
Children's Folk-Songs, for Single Voice and Pianoforte.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
JUN 2 - 1932
LIBRARY

ML
410
B8C6
1908
c.1
MUSI